THE HISTORY OF
ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA
AND HER COMPANIONS.

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ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

From the Engraving of Francesco Vanni

THE HISTORY OF ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

AND HER COMPANIONS

WITH A TRANSLATION OF HER TREATISE ON CONSUMMATE PERFECTION

BY

AUGUSTA THEODOSIA DRANE

AUTHOR OF "CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS AND SCHOLARS," ETC.

THIRD EDITION

IN TWO VOLUMES

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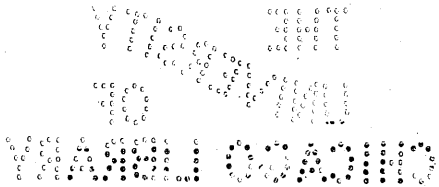

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PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION

THERE already exist in various languages more than sixty Lives of St. Catherine of Siena. In presence of such a fact, an apology seems called for on the part of any one who should propose to add to their number. It will, however, be borne in mind that most of these Lives are little more than translations or abridgments of the original Legend written by Raymund of Capua, the Saint's Confessor: they furnish us with no new facts, and do not even attempt to restore that chronological order of events which was entirely neglected by St. Catherine's first biographer. There are two notable exceptions indeed to which this remark does not apply: the *Storia di Santa Caterina da Siena, e del Papato del suo tempo*, by Mgr. Alfonso Capecelatro; and the *Histoire de Ste. Catherine de Sienne*, by M. Emile Chavan de Malan.[1] Of the first-named work it is impossible to speak too highly. The author has brought the public life of St. Catherine and her relations with the Papacy within the compass of a single volume, full of historical research, and has made excellent use of some of the Saint's letters. But, as may be gathered from the title of the book, he deals almost exclusively with her public career, and cannot therefore be said to have given us her complete biography. M. Chavan de Malan has attempted a restoration of the chronology of St. Catherine's life, and has consulted many valuable authorities. He has also in-

[1] To these we must now add the Life published in 1880 by Madame la Comtesse de Flavigny, carefully compiled from original sources.

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cluded in his volumes illustrations from Italian history which throw more or less light on the state of society in the fourteenth century. His interesting work, however, is open to one objection; he has not been able to refrain from filling up the historic outline of his narrative with materials purely imaginary; so that fact and fiction are often mingled in his pages, which thus, in some parts, assume the colouring of a romance. Neither of these works has found an English translator, and we, as yet, possess but two (Catholic) Lives of St. Catherine in the English language. The first is a translation of the Legend, published at Philadelphia in the year 1860. It has the disadvantage of being the translation of a translation; being made, not from the Latin original, nor even from the Italian version of that original, but from M. Cartier's French translation of that version. Hence it is not surprising that the result has been unsatisfactory, and that in many places even the sense of the author has not been conveyed. The second work above alluded to is a reprint from the old English translation of F. Ambrogio Caterino Politi's abridgment of the Legend. This translation was made in 1609 by Father John Fen, Confessor to the English nuns at Louvain. It was re-edited in 1867 by the Very Rev. Father James Dominic Aylward, English Provincial of the Order of Preachers, and is now out of print. The translator has contrived to give to his version all the charm of an original work. Nothing can surpass the pathos and animation of some of the narratives, as related in the fine old English of the *bel secolo* of our language. Several such passages, the unction of which could never be equalled by a modern pen, have been freely embodied in the following pages. Nevertheless, the superior merit of this little book is entirely one of style. Father Politi's chronology is quite as confused as that of the Legend which he abridges; and neither from one nor the other can we gather any clear notion of the consecutive order of the events narrated.[1]

[1] To be strictly accurate, we must add to the above the *Lyf of St. Katherin of Senis*, printed by Caxton, a copy of which bibliographical rarity is in the Chatsworth Library, having been purchased by the Duke of Devonshire for

In the present volume the writer has aimed at giving the facts of St. Catherine's life as recorded by other biographers, restoring their chronological order, and at the same time supplementing them with additional matter drawn from original sources hitherto either partially or entirely neglected. Very ample use has been made of St. Catherine's own letters, those wonderful compositions of which we as yet possess no English translation, but a knowledge of which is essential to our forming any real acquaintance with the saintly writer. Yet the letters themselves cannot be understood without some explanation of the history and circumstances of those to whom they were addressed; and this naturally introduces the reader to the members of that spiritual "family" of which she was the Mother and Head.

The position occupied by St. Catherine was altogether an exceptional one. She was never the member of a religious community, yet neither was she a secular, nor a recluse. She appears before us surrounded by a group of disciples bound to her by no other ties than those of personal affection, and numbering among them men and women of every variety of age, station, and character. Blessed Raymund himself, and her other confessors; her three secretaries Neri, Stephen, and Barduccio; Master Matthew, whom she cured of the plague, and the English hermit, William Flete; her sister-in-law Lisa, and Alexia her chosen friend; with all these we make acquaintance in a passing way in the pages of the Legend; and the wish must have occurred to many readers that we could know them better, and interrogate them concerning their intercourse with her to whose daily life it was their privilege to be thus associated. To respond in some measure to this wish the writer has endeavoured to include in the history of St. Catherine such notices of her companions as can be gathered from authentic letters and records still preserved; and at the

the sum of £231. Another copy is preserved in the Grenville Library in the British Museum. Caxton's Life of the Saint was reprinted by Wynkyn de Worde. A summary of her doctrine, containing extracts from her Dialogue, was also printed in 1519 by Wynkyn de Worde, entitled, "Booke of Dyvyne Doctrine," by Richard Sutton, London.

same time to gather up in their own words the testimony which they have borne to the sanctity of which they were so long the eye-witnesses.

It remains to enumerate the chief authorities from which the following narrative has been compiled, giving at the end of each notice the abridged word by which reference is made to the works in question.

1. *Vita della Serafica Sposa di Gesu Christo, Sta. Caterina da Siena.* This is the Italian version of the original life, commonly called the *Legend.* It was written in Latin by Raymund of Capua, the Saint's confessor, and was first translated into Italian by her secretary, Neri di Landoccio dei Paglieresi, and another anonymous writer. When in 1707 Girolamo Gigli, Professor of *Belles Lettres* in the University of Siena, undertook the publication of St. Catherine's Life and complete Works, he caused a new translation of the Legend to be made by the Canonico Bernardino Pecci; and this now forms the first volume of the *Opere di Santa Caterina;* the second and third volumes containing her Letters, and the fourth her Dialogue. It was Gigli's intention to have published besides these a considerable number of other precious manuscripts preserved at Siena; but the troubles in which he became involved with the Academy *della Crusca* and the Tuscan Government, which ended in his banishment, prevented the completion of his design. In the learned Prologues, however, which he has prefixed to his published volumes, he has done much to facilitate the study of what we may call the literature of St. Catherine; and has left stamped on his writings the marks of that tender devotion to the Saint which moved him, whilst engaged in these labours, daily to visit her relics, and there to implore with tears that she would obtain for him, by her intercession, the salvation of his soul. (*Leg.*)

2. *La Leggenda Minore.* This is an abridgment of Raymund's work, written in Latin by F. Tommaso d' Antonio Nacci Caffarini, and translated into Italian by Stephen Maconi. It contains several additions that are not to be found in the original Legend. Caffarini was well acquainted with St. Catherine many years before she

became known to Raymund; and the events of her earlier life, which Raymund gathered from the lips of others, had fallen under his own personal observation. The *Leggenda Minore* finds a place in the very rare *Santuario* of Mombrizio (Milan, 1479), whence the Bollandists extracted the additional matter, and printed it as an Appendix to the Latin Legend, under the title of *Analecta de S. Catherina, ex vita Fr. Thomæ collecta.* In the year 1868 Stephen Maconi's Italian translation of the work was edited by Signor F. Grottanelli, the learned librarian of Siena, who enriched it with a number of valuable notes. It forms one of the volumes of that "Collection of Rare and inedited Works," which has been published by the Royal *Commissione pe' Testi di Lingua.* (*Leg. Min.*)

3. *Supplimento alla Leggenda di Santa Caterina.* The Supplement to Raymund's Legend was written in Latin by Caffarini, and contains much additional and interesting information. In 1754 an Italian translation of the work was published at Lucca by F. Ambrogio Ansano Tantucci. This translation has now become extremely rare, and M. Cartier, who has made a French translation from it, calls it *presque introuvable.* Valuable as it is, Tantucci's translation is far from being a perfect or exact version of Caffarini's work. He has entirely omitted some treatises, and abridged others. Considerable use has been made of the work in the following narrative, but in some places references will be found given to the *Latin* Supplement, when the passages referred to have been omitted or altered in the Italian translation. Caffarini's original work is preserved in the Communal Library of Siena, whence authentic copies of some of the missing portions have been obtained for the present work. (*Sup. or Lat. Sup.*)

4. *Lettere di Santa Caterina.* Several editions of the Saint's Letters have at various times been published: the first being the Aldine Edition, printed at Venice in 1500; which was followed by another in 1548 by Toresano, and another in 1579 by Farri; both likewise published at Venice. In the present work the edition of Girolamo Gigli has generally been quoted, enriched as it is by the explanatory notes of F. Federigo Burlamacchi, S. J.,

whose researches into contemporary history may be said to have exhausted the subject. They form in fact the chief and best authority for reconstructing the History of St. Catherine. A later edition of the Letters was published at Florence in 1860, by F. Tommaseo, which contains nothing of additional value. A good French translation has been made by M. Cartier, who has prefixed to his volumes an admirable sketch of the Saint's public career. He has also attempted a restoration of the chronology, for the satisfactory completion of which, however, he lacked the necessary materials. In all references to the letters the numbers given are those of Gigli's edition.[1]

* 5. *Note originali d'illustrazione alla Leggenda compendiata dal Caffarini.* These notes to the *Leggenda Minore* are from the pen of Burlamacchi, and are of great value. They have never been printed, and exist in MS. only in the Library of Siena. They do not even seem to have been prepared for publication, for the authority for each separate statement is not precisely given; though the materials are all gathered from the Supplimento and the Process of Venice (*Notes to Leg. Min.*)

6. *Processus contestationum super sanctitate et doctrina B. Catherinæ de Senis.* (*Martene et Durand. Ampliss. Coll. Vet. Script. Tom.* vi.) This is the famous *Process of Venice*, containing the depositions of certain persons who were cited to appear before Francis Bembo, Bishop of Venice, in 1411, to answer the charges brought against them of rendering public honours to Catherine of Siena before she had yet been canonised by the Church. The result of the investigation was a declaration that in all that they had done to honour Catherine's memory, the Friars of her Order had incurred no blame; and the depositions of the witnesses were afterwards used in the Process of her Canonisation. The document, as it appears in the pages of Martene and Durand, is exceedingly imperfect, containing the

[1] The authorities marked (*) are all inedited MSS. preserved in the Communal Library of Siena, whence authentic copies have been procured for the use of the writer, through the generous kindness of Signor Bernardo Fabbricotti, of Leghorn.

depositions of seven witnesses only, whereas the original Process, of which a copy is preserved at Siena, contains twenty-four. The seven depositions above-named are, however, some of the most important, and they have been largely drawn from in the compilation of the following narrative. Three of the missing depositions have been printed by Baluze, in the fourth volume of his Miscellanea. (*Process.*)

7. *Deposition of Don Francesco Malevolti.* This very important memoir, which forms part of the original Process, has never been printed, and strange to say, it has rarely even been quoted. References to it will often be found in Gigli's Prologues; but these give a most imperfect idea of the contents or value of the original. A perfect copy of it is preserved in the *Biblioteca Casanatense* at Rome; from which, through the kindness of the late Most Rev. Père A. V. Jandel, Master General of the Order of Preachers, an authentic copy was made for the Library of St. Dominic's Convent, Stone. This document will be found frequently quoted, and at a considerable length; nor will the reader fail to appreciate Malevolti's merit both as a witness and a writer.

* 8. *Sommario del Processo di Santa Caterina, fatto dal Padre Angiolo Maria Carapelli.*

* 9. *Sommario di cose appartenente a Santa Caterina.*

* 10. *Sommario di Notizie della Vita di S. Caterina.* These three manuscripts contain the sum of the Depositions, including those which remain unpublished, and have proved of very great value. They are all of them copies of manuscripts preserved at Siena.

* 11. *Corso Cronotastico della Vita di Santa Caterina da Siena. Dal R. P. Fra Angiolo Maria Carapelli, O. P.* This invaluable work, together with many others from the pen of the same learned writer, who devoted himself with such ardour to the study and illustration of St. Catherine's life, exists only in manuscript, in the library of Siena. In compiling his chronology the writer has consulted every authority within his reach, and has thrown great light on many difficult points, though his conclusions sometimes appear

open to question. When, however, we have found ourselves obliged to differ from an authority so deserving of respect, the reasons for such difference have been carefully assigned in a foot note. (*Corso Cron.*)

* 12. *Sermo in reverentiam Beatæ Katherinæ de Senis*, 1382.

13. *Epistola ad Mãgm Raimundum da Capua.* These two curious documents are of great interest to the English reader, as being from the pen of F. William Flete, the English Augustinian hermit, who was one of St. Catherine's confessors and chosen friends. They have never hitherto been quoted at any length, though many references to F. William will be found in Gigli's Prefaces, and in Burlamacchi's Notes to the letters. Independent of the interest which attaches to the author from his connection with St. Catherine, he was in his own time a notable English worthy, whose words had no little weight with his countrymen, and whose authority was respectfully appealed to by the Parliament of the realm.

* 14. *Notale relative ad alcune Visioni avute da Santa Caterina nella terra di Voragine.*

* 15. *Relazione del passagio di S. Cat. in Voragine.* These two MSS. restore to us a lost page in St. Catherine's history, the narrative, namely, of that visit to Voragine which finds no record in the Legend, though it is alluded to in the Process.

16. *Sommario della disputa a difesa delle sacre Stimate di Santa Caterina da Siena: dal R. P. Fra Gregorio Lombardelli, O. P.* This is a summary of the great work of Lombardelli on the Stigmas of St. Catherine, which is preserved in MS. in the Vatican Library. The *Sommario* alone was printed at Siena in 1601, but has now become so rare as to be, practically speaking, unattainable. Through the courteous kindness, however, of the Rev. P. F. Thomas Bonnet, Librarian of the *Biblioteca Casanetense*, at Rome, a transcription has been made from the copy preserved in that library for the present work.

17. *Breve Relazione del modo come fu portata da Roma a Siena la sacra testa di Santa Caterina.* (*Siena*, 1683.) The history of the removal of St. Catherine's head from Rome to Siena is accu-

rately given in this narrative, published anonymously, but written, as we learn from F. Angiolo Carapelli, by F. Tommaso Angiolini, O. P.

18. *Alcuni Miracoli di Santa Caterina da Siena, secondo che sono narrati da un anonimo, suo contemporaneo.* This little memoir was well known both to Gigli and F. Burlamacchi, who frequently quote from it. It was among the manuscripts which Gigli promised to publish, but it remained inedited until the year 1862, when it was printed from the MS. at Siena by Signor Grottanelli, only 250 copies, however, being struck off. The narrative is of great interest, though the statements of the writer betray just that kind of inaccuracy which is incident to those who attempt to write of contemporaneous events.

19. *Memorie di Ser Christofano di Galgano Guidini, da Siena.* This very curious autobiography of one of the most devoted of St. Catherine's disciples has been frequently quoted, both by Gigli, and other writers. It remained unpublished, however, until 1842, when it was printed in the 4th volume of the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, to which valuable collection we are likewise indebted for the *Chronica Antiqua Conventus S. Catherinæ in Pisis*, which appears in the 6th volume.

20. *Lettere dei discepoli di Santa Caterina da Siena.* This collection of letters, long preserved in manuscript in the library of Siena, was printed for the first time by Signor Grottanelli in 1868, at the end of the *Leggenda Minore.* The letters furnish us with most valuable and interesting information, and admit us into the private circle of the Saint's spiritual family.

21. *Lettere di Santi e Beati Fiorentini.* (*Florence*, 1736.) In this collection are to be found two letters from Don John of the Cells referring to St. Catherine, and one from the Blessed John Dominic.

22. *De Vita et Moribus Beati Stephani Maconi Senensis, Auctore D. Bartholomeo Senensi. Siena*, 1626. (*Vit. Steph. Mac.*)

23. *Divæ Catherinæ Senensis Vita, per Joannem Pinum, Gallum Tolosanum.* John Pino's "Life of St. Catherine" was

published at Bologna in 1505. It contains some additional details concerning the Saint's visit to Avignon; and Gigli, who notices the book in the Prologue to the Legend, thinks it possible that the author derived his information from authentic sources, collected on the spot. Baronius speaks of him as "an exact writer." (*Pino.*)

24. *Vita da S. Caterina da Siena, da P. Paolo Frigerio.* (*Roma*, 1656.) This life by P. Frigerio, of the Oratory, is noteworthy as one of the very few in which any attempt has been made to add to the materials collected by Raymund. It includes extracts from the life of Stephen Maconi, and from some manuscripts furnished to the writer by Pope Alexander VII., by whose command the work was undertaken.

25. *Capitolo in terza rima in laude di Santa Caterina da Siena, per Anastagio da Monte Altino, vivendo ancora lei nella presente vita.*

26. *Uno Capitolo in rima fatto per Jacobo di Monte Pulciano in reverentia di Santa Caterina.*

27. *Uno Capitolo in rima fatto per Raniero de' Paglieresi, da Siena.* These poetical compositions, made by three of St. Catherine's attached disciples, are of great interest and value. Anastagio writes of her as one still living, and depicts her as she appeared at the moment before his bodily eyes. They are printed (complete) at the end of the Venice Editions of her letters.

28. *Storia di Santa Caterina da Siena, e del Papato del suo tempo, per Alfonso Capecelatro.* (Florence, 1863.) This excellent work has been already named, and to the researches of the author all subsequent biographers of St. Catherine must express their obligation. The value of the book is much increased by the full and accurate *Elenca*, or catalogue of all works, whether printed or in MS., relating to the Saint, which is given as an appendix in the third and fourth editions. It is from the pen of Signor Grottanelli, and an attentive study of its places at our command all the treasures of the Roman and Sienese Libraries which contribute any additional materials to our stock of know-

ledge in what concerns the history of St. Catherine. (*Capecelatro.*)

29. *Annales Ecclesiastici; continuatio Oderici Raynaldi.* These volumes contain the continuation of the Church Annals of Cardinal Baronius by Oderico Rinaldi, and have been the chief authority consulted for the historical notice of the Great Schism. (*Rinaldi.*)

30. *Vitæ Paparum Avenonensium: Steph. Baluzii.* (Paris 1693.)

31. *Muratori: Italicarum Rerum Scriptores.* The 15th volume of this collection contains the Sienese chronicles of Andrea Dei, continued by Angelo Tura; and those by Neri Donato.

32. *The Chronicles of St. Antoninus of Florence.* In his third volume St. Antoninus gives a life of St. Catherine abridged from the Legend, but interspersed with some valuable remarks of his own.

33. *Diario Sanese* (*Diar. San.*)

34. *Vocabolario Cateriniano* (*Vocab. Cat.*) These two works are by Girolamo Gigli. In the first he has collected every information regarding the churches, monuments, festivals, and customs of Siena which can be of interest to the historian or the antiquary. In the second he gives a vocabulary of such words in St. Catherine's works as differ from the Tuscan approved by the Academies of Florence, and belong rather to the Sienese dialect. His preference of the latter, and his witty sarcasms on the Florentines, gave offence at the court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and were the cause of his disgrace and exile. By a decree of the Grand Duke, every copy of his book was ordered to be given up and publicly burnt. A sufficient number were actually destroyed to render the work a choice rarity; but many persons who possessed the prohibited volume relished its contents so much that they concealed their copies, and only gave up sham imitations to the flames; while the book was eagerly sought for by collectors, especially those of the English nation.

35. *Il Dialogo della Serafica Santa Caterina da Siena.* (*Dial.*) This forms the fourth volume of Gigli's edition of St. Catherine's

works, which contains likewise her Treatise on Consummate Perfection and her Prayers, together with a few other fragments and documents. The Dialogue has more than once been translated into French, the latest edition being that of M. Cartier; but no English version as yet exists. May we live to see the day when the English reader shall possess a complete edition of St. Catherine's works, from which alone can be obtained any just conception of her illuminated wisdom!

In the above list are not included the more generally known Italian historians—references to whose works will be found in the foot-notes, and who have been quoted only so far as was strictly necessary to elucidate the course of the narrative. For the object aimed at in these pages has been less to present the reader with a complete history of the age of St. Catherine than to make him better acquainted with the Saint herself. It is her character as a woman that most requires to be made known, for it has hitherto been partially concealed by the very splendour of her historical reputation. Stupendous as is the story of her life, it has, nevertheless, a side which brings her within the reach of ordinary sympathies. Catherine, the Seraphic Bride of Christ, espoused to Him at Siena; stigmatised at Pisa; supported on the Bread of Life; the Pacificator of Florence; the Ambassadress of Gregory; the Councillor of Urban; the Martyr for the unity of the Holy See;—this is indeed a character that overwhelms us with its very greatness. But Catherine, the Lover of God and man, who gave away her will with her heart to her divine Spouse; the tender mother of a spiritual family; the friend of the poor; the healer of feuds, the lover of her country;—Catherine, with all her natural gifts of prudence and womanly tact; with her warm affections, and her love of the beautiful; with her rare genius refined, spiritualised, and perfected by Divine illumination; surrounded by men and women like ourselves, with whose infirmities she bore, and whom she loved as heartily as they loved her in return; Catherine, with her wise and graceful words, her "gracious smile," and her sweet attractive presence,—this is a being to be loved and imitated; we open our very hearts to

receive her within them, and to enshrine her there, not as a Saint only, but as a mother and a friend.

In conclusion, it need only be remarked that in the attempt so to represent our glorious Saint, the rule has been strictly adhered to of excluding all imaginary details, and introducing nothing for which there do not exist unimpeachable authorities. Where such authorities have failed to fill up the gaps in our Biography, they have been left unfilled.

The Frontispiece to the present volume is a *fac-simile* of that prefixed to the pictured Life of St. Catherine engraved in 1597 by Francesco Vanni, and reprinted at Antwerp by Cornelius Galle, in 1603.

Appended to the present Edition will be found a translation of the Treatise on Consummate Perfection, which it is hoped will find a welcome from every lover of St. Catherine.

A. T. D.

St. Dominic's Convent, Stone,
May 30, 1887.

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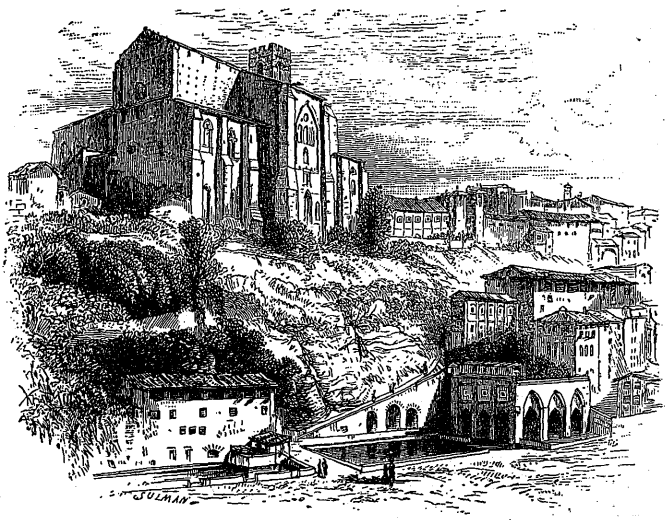
Part I

ST. CATHERINE AT SIENA



CHURCH OF S. DOMENICO, SIENA

CHAPTER I

Catherine's Family and Childhood, 1347–1359

THE plains which occupy the centre of Tuscany, lying between the sources of the Arno, the Tiber, and the Ombrone, present few of those distinctive features of beauty which we are wont to associate with an Italian landscape. The wide and desolate levels are broken only by insignificant sand-hills which scarcely interrupt our view of the vast horizon. As we approach the southern boundary of this district, however, the country becomes more hilly and diversified; villages and cultivated farms everywhere appear; and these, together with the frequent recurrence of the familiar foliage of the oak, may possibly carry back the thoughts of an English traveller to scenes nearer home. It needs but a second glance, however, to remind

him that he is treading the soil of Italy, as his eye catches the glitter of the silvery olive on the hillsides, or, in lieu of the tapering spire of an English village church, rests on the tall and graceful campanile. Above all, he will recognise in the heavens which shine over these Tuscan plains a beauty such as our northern latitudes can never boast; for the sky is as full of light as that of Attica, and its brilliancy is reflected in the gay and lively character of the people over whom it smiles.

It is then in this part of Tuscany, as it approaches nearer to the mountains, on an eminence 1300 feet above the level of the sea, that stands Siena, "the city of the Virgin," lifting her quaint towers into that luminous atmosphere, and seeming by her very position to command the surrounding plains. So her poets have loved to describe her, "towering from the hills, basking in the light of those serene and glowing heavens; full of all that is gay and graceful in manners; all her sons brave and courteous, and all her daughters beautiful."[1]

There is probably no city in Italy which retains so exclusively medieval an aspect. When the storm of the classical Renaissance swept over the land, it spared the red brick towers of Siena, and left her churches and palaces standing almost as they stood in the fourteenth century. Her walls are still unlevelled, and her gates retain not only their ancient names, but the very pictures of the Blessed Virgin placed there centuries ago by the magistrates of the republic in thanksgiving for her signal protection of the city. The view from those walls has its resemblances and its contrasts with that which would have met the eye five hundred years ago. Within their enclosure lies the ancient city, covering the space of three hills, each of which is crowned by some dome or tapering campanile, while from the very centre of the group rises the lofty tower of the Palazzo Pubblico. At the time to which our story belongs there would have been seen a fair display

[1] "Siena, dal colle ove torregia e siede."—*Alfieri.*

"Di leggiadria, di bei costumi è piena,
Di vaghe donne e d'uomini cortesi,
L'aere è dolce, lucida e serena."—*Fazio degli Uberti.*

of other towers, which gave to Siena an appearance of splendour which is now considerably diminished. Permission was granted to the great families to attach such appendages to their palaces, in reward of any distinguished service, and no more ignominious sentence could be decreed against an offender, were he of noble blood, than the destruction of his tower. But in the sixteenth century, when Siena had long lost her freedom, they were most of them ruthlessly levelled by Diego di Mendoza, the Spanish lieutenant of the Emperor Charles V., and the materials used in the construction of a fortress.

If the interior aspect of the city is thus shorn somewhat of its ancient dignity, the suburbs and surrounding country have proportionably gained. We look now over plains covered with cultivation, where the white walls of convents and villas gleam through olive woods and vineyards, or the darker foliage of the cypress or the stone pine. And hidden away in their recesses lies many a pleasant garden, for the Sienese are now, as ever, great lovers of flowers. In the fourteenth century the country presented a far more desolate appearance, continually ravaged as it was by hostile armies or bands of freebooters. But the main features are nevertheless the same: there is the torrent of the Tressa still flowing fast below the walls; to the north there is that immense horizon which has its transparent vastness for its solitary beauty; to the south we behold rising in the distance the rugged heights of Radicofani, and Monte Amiata.

Of the three hills on which Siena is built, one is surmounted by the Duomo, or cathedral, an unfinished fragment consisting of what, were the work completed, would form only the transept of the edifice. Yet even thus it claims to be the masterpiece of Italian Gothic, and on it, century after century, the artists and sculptors of Siena have lavished the best efforts of their genius. There may be seen the curious pavement inlaid with stories from the Old Testament, which is thought by some to have suggested to Dante a famous passage in the Purgatorio;[1] there in the frieze on either side of the nave are the long rows of tiara'd heads, the

[1] Purgatorio, Canto xii. 9–33, 56–67.

portraits of the Popes from St. Peter to Alexander III., so wonderful in their expression of majesty; there, fixed against the pilasters which support the dome, are the poles of the Florentine *Carroccio*, or Car of the Standard, captured by the Sienese in 1260, at their great victory of Monte Aperto; and there is the pulpit, the most magnificent work of Nicolo da Pisa, from which the great patriarch St. Dominic preached when first he visited this city, when, according to the ancient legend, the Blessed Virgin was seen standing by his side and inspiring his discourse.

On the hill to the north of that occupied by the Duomo, standing apart from other buildings on a kind of cliff with gardens and underwood creeping up its sides, there rises another church which, if possessing less architectural beauty, nevertheless fails not to rivet the eye by its commanding position. It is the Church of San Domenico, occupying the site called the Campo Reggio, from the circumstance that Henry, king of the Romans, encamped his army here when he came to besiege Siena in 1186. It was then outside the city walls, and was the property of the Malevolti, a family devoted to the Imperial cause, one of whom, Malevolti the Strong Arm, as he was called, bestowed it in 1220 on the founder of the Friars Preachers. It is, alas! no longer in the possession of the Order to which it is linked by a thousand associations, having passed in 1784 into the hands of the Benedictines of Monte Cassino. But for the moment we will only remind ourselves that it was the third foundation of our Holy Father St. Dominic, that within its walls he gave the habit to Tancred Tancredi, that beneath its altars repose the ashes of Blessed Ambrose Sansedoni, and that for thirty years its pavement was almost daily trodden by the footsteps of St. Catherine of Siena.

Its dimensions have been added to since her time, the transepts not having been opened until 1465. But the lower church or crypt where the friars used to assemble for the office of the dead, and where was the burial place of her family, is now abandoned, and in Gigli's days was used to contain the straw and other stores of the neighbouring fortress. Formerly it boasted of a tower of extraordinary beauty, built by the Tancredi family, who were

great benefactors to the Order. Next to the tower of the Palazzo Pubblico it was reckoned the most beautiful in Tuscany. Above the topmost cornice rose a lofty pinnacle, with other smaller pinnacles at the corners; but these were so frequently struck and injured by lightning that at length the friars pulled them down, to the intense indignation of the citizens, who denounced them as unworthy of possessing so exquisite an edifice if they cared not to keep it in repair.

The depression between the two hills of which we have spoken is known as the Valle Piatta, at the bottom of which appears the famous fountain of Fontebranda, first erected in 1081 by the family of Branda, and enlarged in 1198, which supplies all this part of the city with water, and has found a notice in the pages of Dante.[1] Turning to the right hand you enter the Strada del l'Oca leading up a steep ascent, on the left-hand side of which stands a house commonly known as the "Fullonica." Over the door of this house you may read in golden letters the words, "*Sponsæ Christi Katherinæ Domus.*" Five hundred years ago it was the residence of Giacomo Benincasa, the dyer, and the father of St. Catherine; it is now one of the holy places of Siena, and the devotion of the citizens has preserved with scrupulous care every apartment once consecrated by the presence of their glorious countrywoman. Enter, and you will see her father's workshop, the stairs she so often ascended on her knees, the kitchen where she discharged her humble household duties, the chamber she was permitted to use as a chapel, and the little cell which for so many years was the scene of her prayers, her penances, and the marvels of her daily intercourse with God. This is "the house of Catherine, the spouse of Christ," the least footprints of whose life have been thus jealously preserved and religiously venerated.

It was a life cast in the midst of days most sorrowful for her country and for Christendom. The latter half of the fourteenth century was rife with those signs of decay which mark the interval between the extinction of an old form of civilisation and the establishment of its successor. The age of chivalry, properly so

[1] Inferno, xxx.

called, was over, and together with the glories of the holy wars we miss those grand Pontificates, under which the brute force of semi-barbarous nations was subdued to the dominion of the faith. The triumph achieved by Philip le Bel over Boniface VIII. had resulted in the removal of the Popes to Avignon, an event equally disastrous to the interests of the Holy See and the welfare of Italy. Rome, abandoned by her legitimate rulers, was left the prey of contending factions; her population dwindled into insignificance; her palaces and sacred temples were crumbling to ruins. The very year which witnessed the birth of St. Catherine was rendered memorable by the seven months' tribuneship of Nicolas Rienzi; but his brief assumption of power was succeeded by fresh revolts, which extended to every part of the Papal dominions, and considerably weakened the authority of the Roman Pontiffs.

Nor was the condition of the Italian republics at this time much more prosperous. It was in great measure through the protection afforded them by the Holy See that so many of the cities of Northern Italy had, at an earlier period, obtained their municipal freedom. Even those which continued to acknowledge the authority of the German Emperors, succeeded in securing for themselves privileges so considerable as to place them in a position of virtual independence, though, by the time of which we are speaking, many of these Ghibeline States had resigned their liberties into the hands of certain families such as the Visconti, who, as lords of Milan, ruled over the greater part of Lombardy. The Guelph cities, on the other hand, retained their republican institutions, though often at a bloody cost. The freedom of Florence and Siena was purchased at the price of revolutions, so numerous and so fruitful in social misery that Dante compares his native city to a sick man tossing on his couch and vainly seeking for ease by a change of posture. The triumph of one faction was followed by the proscription of its rival, and hence arose those deadly family feuds which gave a yet more acrimonious character to party strife.

It was not merely the old contest between Guelph and

Ghibeline, kept alive and embittered as the exiles from one city took refuge in a neighbouring state, and were ever ready to avenge their wrongs by turning their swords against their fellow-citizens. A new source of civil contention arose in the thirteenth century, when the people, growing jealous of the power of the nobles, began to league together, to exclude them from all share in the government, until at length this jealousy of their rulers, whether noble or plebeian, became so preposterous that in most of the Tuscan republics no man was allowed to exercise the higher offices of state for more than two months at a time. This was the case in Siena, where at the period of St. Catherine's birth the government was in the hands of the *popolani*, or middle-class tradesmen.

Their supremacy had not been established without a fierce struggle. In the twelfth century Siena adopted the consular form of government, and the head of the republic enjoyed the title and authority of Podestà. This office was generally held by one of noble birth, but in 1267 the rivalries of Guelph and Ghibeline brought about a revolution, which resulted in the establishment of a new constitution, and the exclusion of the nobles (who mostly belonged to the Ghibeline faction) from all offices of state. The popular party, who represented the Guelphs, now prevailed; nine magistrates were annually chosen from the plebeian class to form the Signoria, but the number of electors was extremely limited, and the government of the Nine, as it was called, came soon to be regarded as an odious oligarchy. In 1355 the arrival in Siena of the Emperor Charles IV. brought about a counter-revolution. The nobles made common cause with the discontented citizens, and encouraged by the Emperor, succeeded in overthrowing the Nine, some of whom were put to death in the heat of popular commotion. In their place were chosen twelve magistrates, two of whom governed conjointly for the space of two months, when they were succeeded by other two. Charles, dissatisfied with this arrangement, made a strenuous effort to obtain the appointment of his natural brother, the Patriarch of Aqueleia, as virtual Chief of the Republic; but the appointment

though made, lasted only a few weeks; the jealousy of the citizens saw in it a design upon their independence, and in May 1355 the Patriarch was forced to offer his resignation, and the government of the Twelve was re-established. This state of things lasted until 1368, when, as we shall see, Siena became the scene of a fresh revolution. These various changes increased the bitterness of existing feuds; the nobles struggled hard to regain some share of political power, and were often in arms against the people; and if to these sources of social disorder we add the frequent plagues which then ravaged Italy, and the lawless bands of the Free Companies, who roamed from state to state, levying contributions on the unwarlike inhabitants, or making them victims to their ferocious violence, we may gather some notion of the wounds of that society to which St. Catherine was sent as an angel of peace.

The family of Benincasa, of which she was a member, belonged to the class of *popolani*, just alluded to, as at that time holding the chief rule in Siena.[1] Giacomo Benincasa himself at one time filled the office of chief magistrate, and the name of his brother Ambrogio, a goldsmith by trade, occurs as one of the "Defenders" of the republic in the months of September and October 1371. It is affirmed by some writers that the families of Benincasa and Borghese had a common origin; but though the fact seems sufficiently authentic, it is certain that the Benincasa made no claim to nobility. They were in the position of substantial tradesmen, enjoying a fair share of worldly prosperity, and owning a little country estate near Santa Maria a Pili, which came into the possession of Lisa, St. Catherine's sister-in-law, after the death of her husband, Bartolo Benincasa. Giacomo was married to Lapa di Puccio di Piagenti, whose father, Mucio Piagenti, is said to have been a poet of some little reputation. Giacomo had a sister, Agnes, married to Chele di Duccio. After she became a widow, she entered among the Sisters of Penance of St. Dominic, and

[1] Raymund of Capua, in the Legend, only says that they held a respectable position among their fellow-citizens; but Caffarini, in the *Leggenda Minore*, particularly notices that "they belonged to the class which then ruled and governed the city of Siena."

her portrait is painted in the dormitory of the Convent of San Domenico, inscribed with the words *Beata Agnese Benincasa.* Lapa also had a family connection with the order of Preachers, for a document is preserved signed and sealed by F. Erveo, Master-General of the Order, granting to Mucio Piagenti and his wife, Cecca, a participation in all the prayers and good works of the brethren in return for their great devotion to the Order.

The pious, simple, and charitable character of Giacomo made him beloved and respected by all his neighbours. He was so mild and guarded in his words that, no matter how much he was provoked, he never gave way to anger; and if he saw any member of his family vexed or disturbed, he would try and calm them, saying, "Now do not be angry, that God may bless you." Once when a fellow-citizen had greatly wronged and calumniated him, Lapa was giving free vent to her indignation, but her husband would not hear his enemy ill-spoken of. "Let him alone, wife, and God will bless us," he said; "it is God who will show him his error, and be our defence." Another virtue in which he excelled was a singular modesty of speech, so that no freedom of language was ever tolerated in his family. His daughter, Bonaventura, having married Niccolo Tegliacci, a citizen of Siena, was often required to entertain her husband's young friends, whose conversation was far from being blameless. Her health broke down, and Niccolo observing that she was pining away from some secret grief, inquired the cause. "In my father's house," she replied, "I was never used to hear such words as those I now daily listen to; be sure that if this goes on you will soon see me dead." Struck with wonder and respect, Niccolo lost no time in making his companions understand that nothing must be said in his wife's presence that could wound her sense of modesty, and ere long the good customs of Giacomo's household were established also in that of his son-in-law.

Lapa Benincasa was an honest and industrious woman, though possessed of very ordinary mind. She bore her husband twenty-five children, the names of thirteen appearing on the family tree. Catherine and her twin sister, Jane, were born on the 25th of

March 1347. Four of her brothers lived to man's estate, Benincasa, Bartolo, Stephen, and Sandro. Of the last-named we know no more than that at the close of the fifteenth century his grandson was still living in Siena. The names of the other three often occur in St. Catherine's life and letters. Benincasa was old enough in 1346 to take a shop and business of his own;[1] he married, and had several children and grandchildren. Bartolo, the second son, was married to Lisa di Golio di Piccio, first cousin to St. John Colombini: Stephen appears to have remained single, and died in Catherine's lifetime. Of the daughters, Nicoluccia was married to Palmiero della Fonte, to which family belonged Father Thomas della Fonte, the Saint's first confessor, who was brought up in her father's house. Magdalen married Bartolo di Vannini; of Bonaventura we have already spoken, and direct descendants from the two last-named sisters were living at Siena in Gigli's time; a fourth sister, Lisa, remained unmarried, and died of the plague in 1374.

The sons, after their marriage, continued, according to the custom of the age, to live with their parents; and up to the time of Giacomo's death in 1368, the large family remained undivided, occupying the house of which we have already spoken as "the Fullonica." Catherine, as the youngest,[2] was the special object of her mother's tenderness. Nor was she the favourite of her own parents alone. As soon as she could walk, her winning ways attracted the notice of the neighbours, who were so charmed with her childish talk that they were always trying to entice her to their houses, so that Lapa found it no easy matter to keep her at home. They gave her the pet name of *Euphrosyne*, which in Greek signifies joy; for, says F. Raymund, "as soon as any one conversed with her, sadness was dispelled from his heart." As she grew in years she grew also in grace and intelligence, and

[1] See the documents printed by Grottanelli. Note 49 to *Leggenda Minore*.

[2] She is so called by F. Raymund, but on the family tree appears the name of "Nanna, *ultima nata*," who died April 18, 1363. The probability, however, is, that this date is incorrect, and that Nanna was identical with Catherine's twin sister Giovanna, who died immediately after their birth.

when no more than five years old, having learned the Hail Mary, she would recite it on each step of the stairs as she went up and down, kneeling on her knees with great reverence. "Whilst yet a mere baby," says a contemporary writer,[1] "the child delighted in going to churches and places of devotion." One day, when she was about six years old, her mother sent her, in company with her brother Stephen, who was a little older, to the house of their married sister Bonaventura. Having discharged their errand they returned homewards, and crossing the Valle Piatta were about to turn into the street now known as the *Cortone* which leads down to Fontebranda, when raising her head and looking towards the Church of San Domenico on the opposite hill, Catherine saw in the heavens a majestic throne set, as it were, upon the gable-end of the church, on which throne appeared our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ crowned with a tiara and wearing pontifical robes, while beside Him stood St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John the Evangelist, and several men in white garments. As she gazed in wonder at the heavenly vision she beheld how our Lord stretched out His right hand towards her, and made over her the sign of the cross, as when a bishop gives his blessing, at the same time bestowing on her a look full of majesty and tenderness. Rapt into a kind of ecstasy, she continued to stand and gaze, wholly absorbed, and as it were united spiritually with that most glorious Lord whom she there beheld, so that she forgot not only whither she was going, but her own self also, and remained there motionless, giving no heed either to men or beasts that passed that way; and so she would have remained even longer had no one called her away. But at length her brother Stephen, who had gone on his way and imagined her to be following, turned back, and seeing her thus standing still in the midst of the road and gazing into the air, he called her aloud by her name, but she gave him no answer, and seemed not so much as to hear him. Then he drew nearer, still calling to her; until at last, coming up to the spot where she stood, he took her by the hand, saying, "What are you doing, why are you staying here?"

[1] *Miracoli*, p. 7.

At which words, roused as it were out of a deep sleep as she felt him pulling her by the hand, she cast down her eyes, and looking at him for a moment, "Oh, did you but see the sight I saw," she said, "never would you have disturbed me." Then she once more raised her eyes, thinking again to have seen the lovely vision; but all had vanished; and full of grief she began to weep bitterly, supposing that she had through her own fault, by turning away her looks, deserved to lose that precious favour. "Having reached home," says the author of the *Miracoli*, "she said nothing to father or mother of what she had seen; but from that day there grew up in her a certain carefulness of soul, a fear and remorse of conscience, and dread of committing sin as far as was possible to one at her age. And ever as she grew in years there increased in her this anxiety, and she bethought her what means she might take to offend God less, and was always seeking to be alone, and to steal away somewhere out of her parents' sight that she might be able to say her prayers in secret."[1] This was the event which, young as she was, for ever drew her heart to the Supreme Beauty; to Him, whom once beheld, she never forgot, and in comparison of whom all earthly things from that hour became as nothingness. From that day she seemed no longer a child; for "the heavenly fire of God's love had wrought such an attraction in her heart, such a light in her understanding, such a fervour in her will, such a pliantness in all her powers both of body and soul to follow the instinct of His Holy Spirit, that to those who saw her behaviour, and took good heed to her words and deeds, it seemed that she was made wholly conformed to Jesus Christ her sweet Spouse and Saviour."[2]

In speaking of this time afterwards to her confessor, F. Raymund, she acknowledged that it was not by reading, or by any human teaching, that the desire arose in her of following a

[1] *Miracoli*, 8, 9. The exact spot where this vision took place was marked by Gigli by a painting and an inscription in the street called the *Cortone*, which leads down to Fontebranda. A few years since the painting having faded, it was restored at the public expense. It is now no longer to be seen, but the inscription remains.

[2] Fen., p. 6.

manner of life similar to that of which we read in the lives of the Fathers of the desert, and other Saints. It was God Himself who inspired it, until she could think of nothing but how she might best bring it to pass. She began, therefore, to plan for herself a new way of life, giving up all childish sports, diminishing her food, and practising other kinds of penance. She also sought out for herself a retired part of the house, where she would scourge herself with a little discipline which she had fashioned out of some cords. Nor did she rest content until she had persuaded some of the neighbours' children to follow her example, so that gathering themselves together with her, they would do the same, saying, meanwhile, a certain number of Paters and Aves, so many as she prescribed; and persevering in these exercises of piety, the more she shunned the company of men the more did she grow in favour with God, so that often when she set herself to go up and down the stairs in her father's house, after the manner that has been already described, she was seen by many persons to be carried in the air without so much as touching any of the steps with her feet, and that with so great rapidity that her mother, who more than once beheld her so borne to the top, trembled lest she should fall.

But the great desire which at this time took possession of her heart was to seek out some solitary place in the wilderness where she might serve God after the manner of the ancient hermits; and following this dream of a childish imagination she determined to leave her father's house, and to set forth in search of the desert. One morning, therefore, prudently providing herself with a loaf of bread, she directed her steps towards the residence of her married sister, which was near the Gate of St. Ansano.[1] Passing through this gate, she found herself for the first time in her life outside the city walls, and going on she came at last to

[1] Frigerio, and after him the Bollandists and P. Capecelatro, identify this as the present Gate of St. Mark. But Signor Grottanelli has corrected this error. The Gate of St. Ansano (which was so called from being close to the spot where, according to tradition, the martyr St. Ansano was thrown into a vessel of boiling pitch) no longer exists; and its site is now occupied by the Church of St. Sebastian, near the *Fosso di St. Ansano.*

where she saw the houses standing one here and another there, and not together as she was wont to see them in the city, for which reason she was glad, hoping that now she must be near to the wilderness. However, she held on her way a little further, and came at last to a place where she found a sort of cave under a shelving rock, which she entered with great joy, believing that she had found at last her much-desired solitude. Without more delay, then, she fell on her knees and began to pray, and gave thanks to God, who was pleased to give her a sensible token that He accepted her good intention, although it was not His purpose to call her to that manner of life. For as she prayed with great fervour she was lifted up above the ground as far as the height of the cave would suffer her to rise; and so she continued until the hour of None. But at that same hour when our Lord was taken down from the Cross, she began by little and little to descend, and understanding at the same time by a secret inspiration that it was not the wish of her Divine Master that she should serve Him after this manner, she thought within herself how she should return home. But coming out of the cave, and finding herself all alone, and a long way from the city gate, she began to fear lest she should not be able to get so far, and considered also the trouble which her father and mother would feel, believing her to be lost. She therefore again had recourse to prayer, and as she herself afterwards acknowledged to her sister-in-law, Lisa, God failed not to supply her weakness, for He sent a little cloud which lifted her from the ground, and carrying her in the air, set her down very shortly at the gate of the city, whence she made her way home with all speed, and found that her parents were in no anxiety about her, supposing her to have been spending the day with her sister Bonaventura.

The failure of this attempt in no way abated Catherine's ardour; and understanding that she was not called to follow the life of the ancient hermits, she resolved at least to imitate those holy virgins of whom she had heard that they dedicated themselves to God by a vow of virginity in their earliest years. Knowing nothing of the world and its pleasures, she yet longed to

renounce them for the love of Him, the vision of Whom "had utterly extinguished in her," says F. Raymund, "the love of this life." One day, therefore, when she was about seven years old, after praying much that our Blessed Lady, the Queen of virgins, would intercede for her with her Divine Son, that she might be shown the way in which she might best please Him, she retired to a secret place where she felt sure of being neither seen nor heard, and kneeling down, she spoke aloud to the Blessed Virgin in the following words: "O most Blessed Lady, and Sacred Mother of God! who before all other women didst by vow consecrate thy virginity to God, I beseech thee to obtain for me such grace and favour with thy Son that, from this day forward, I may take Him to be the Spouse of my soul. And I here give my faith and promise to Him and to thee, that I will never take other spouse but Him, and so far as in me lies will keep myself pure and unspotted for Him alone to the end of my days."

This done, she set herself to consider what steps she might best take to secure her own fidelity to that which she had promised. She regarded herself as henceforth bound to a life of perfection. "She often assured her confessors," says Caffarini,[1] "that from the time she thus consecrated herself to God (which she did when little more than six years old), if she entertained so much as an idle thought, or fell into any fault which, however trifling, seemed enormous in her eyes, she lost no time in humbling herself and doing penance." Moreover, by a secret instinct of grace, she understood that she had now entered on a warfare with nature which demanded the mortification of every sense. She resolved, therefore, to add fasting and watching to her other penances, and in particular to abstain entirely from meat; so that when any was placed before her, she either gave it to her brother Stephen, who sat beside her, or threw it under the table to the cats, in such a manner as to avoid notice. She began also to feel a great zeal, not only for her own sanctification, but also for that of other souls whom she longed to gain to God. On this account she cherished a singular devotion towards those

[1] Sup., Part 1, Trat. 2, § 1.

saints who had laboured most for the salvation of souls. And learning that the great patriarch, St. Dominic, had founded his Order expressly for this end, she conceived a special love for him, and was accustomed to hold the brethren of that Order in such reverence that when she saw any of them passing her father's house, she would go after them and humbly kiss the very steps where they had set their feet. In her childish imagination she even longed to embrace their rule, and disguising herself as a man to be received among them in some distant cloister where she, too, in the livery of St. Dominic, might spend her days in winning souls to God; a thought which had perhaps been first suggested by the history of St. Euphrosyne, by whose name, as has been said, she was commonly called, and with whose legend on that account she was probably familiar.

Yet with the lively imagination of a child there mingled, even at this early age, in the character of Catherine, a sense and maturity far beyond her years. Her parents and their neighbours often had occasion to admire the gravity and discretion of her words, which inspired them with a feeling of respect. One instance of this was often related by Lapa, and has been preserved by all her biographers. She was not yet ten years old when one day her mother called her, and bade her go to their parish church[1] and ask the priest to say a mass in honour of St. Antony, at the same time giving her some money and candles which were to be offered at the altar. Catherine gladly obeyed, and having discharged her commission, she stayed for her own devotion till the end of the mass. But her mother thought that she would have returned home after making her oblation to the priest; and on her reappearance addressed her in angry words, "Cursed be the tongues!" she exclaimed, "that said my daughter should come no more;[2] she has come at length, though she has tarried long on the way." The child, hearing these words, held

[1] Of St. Antonio in Fontebranda, Diario San., 2. 71.

[2] Raymund explains this as a sort of idiom in use among the vulgar when expostulating with any one who delays: "Cosi suol dirsi da alcuni del volgo a coloro che troppo indugiano." Leg., Part 1, cap. 3.

herself still for a while and returned no answer. But after a little space, when she had, as it were, taken counsel with herself, she drew her mother aside, and said with great gravity and respect, "My honoured mother,[1] when you see me transgress any of your commands, beat me with a rod if you think well, that I may be more wary another time, for it is only right that you should do so. But one thing I pray, that for my faults you curse no man or woman in this world, for it is unseemly for you to do so, and a great grief for me to hear." Her mother wondered as she listened to the wise words of the child; but not wishing to show what she felt, she asked her why she had stayed so long away. "I only stayed," she replied, "to hear the mass which you bid me ask for, and that done, I came straight home again, and went nowhere else." Lapa was greatly edified at this reply; and as soon as her husband came home she told him all that had passed, and both gave thanks to God for the singular tokens of grace and prudence which became daily more apparent in their little daughter.

[1] Leg., Part 1, cap. 3. *Madonna Madre;* an expression of unusual respect, which Catherine used because she was about to say what implied a reproof of her mother; and she desired therefore to express it in the most humble and deferential language.

CHAPTER II

Her Domestic Persecution, 1359–1363

WHEN Catherine was about twelve years old, her father and mother began to think how they might bestow her in marriage, and according to the custom of the country with young maidens of that age, she was kept more strictly at home, while at the same time her mother began to urge her to give more time and attention to her dress and the adornment of her hair and person. These exhortations were very unwelcome to Catherine, who was far indeed from desiring to make herself more attractive to the eyes of men. On the contrary, she avoided them with a kind of horror, and as her confessor informs us, if she chanced at this time to meet any of her father's apprentices who lived in the house, she fled from them as if they had been serpents. Neither would she even approach the door or window to gaze at passers-by, her whole anxiety being to keep herself hidden from all notice. It may well be supposed, therefore, that she showed small willingness to comply with her mother's wishes; so that after many fruitless contentions, Lapa was forced to call in the aid of her married daughter Bonaventura, whom she begged to use her influence with her sister and persuade her to adopt the dress and ornaments suitable to her age. She well knew the special affection which Catherine bore towards her elder sister, and trusted that Bonaventura might succeed where she had failed. Nor were her hopes disappointed. The example and persuasive words of Bonaventura won so far upon her sister, that she was induced to give more time to her toilette, and particularly to the care of her hair, which was of great beauty. John Pino, in his

Life of the Saint, describes it as being of a golden brown,[1] an expression confirmed by F. Bartholomew Dominici in his deposition. Hair of this particular hue has always been held in singular esteem by the natives of Italy, and Lapa might therefore have been well content with the personal advantages which nature had bestowed on her daughter. But there existed at that time the ridiculous fashion of using certain unguents for the purpose of altering the natural colour of the hair, and Lapa could not be satisfied until Catherine's beautiful tresses had been subjected to this ill-advised treatment.[2]

Her triumph, however, was of short duration. If, in compliance with her sister's persuasion, Catherine had yielded somewhat to the besetting folly of her sex, she no sooner had time for reflection than she conceived an intense remorse for her weakness, believing herself to have been thereby guilty of a grievous offence against God. And in this light she ever continued to regard it; weeping over her fault, and again and again seeking to wash away the stain which she thought she had contracted by humble self-accusation. She used often to make a general confession of her whole life, and whenever she came to this point, says F. Raymund, "she could make no end of weeping and lamenting." As she appeared to consider this fault as one deserving of eternal punishment, he once took occasion to question her whether at that time she had any purpose of acting contrary to her vow. To which she replied that such a thought had never once entered her heart. Then he inquired if she had desired to be liked or admired by men; and she answered by saying that there was nothing that grieved her more than when by any necessity she was seen by them. "Why, then," said he, "do you take your offence to be

[1] Flavum illum capillum et aureum, jubet abicere. Pino, *Vita*, p. 8. Capillos flavos quos habebat, abscidit. Process, 1314.

[2] We gather this from the expression used by Caffarini in the *Leggenda Minore*, "Era sollecita, che Caterina *facci e' capegli biondi.*" Signor Grottanelli has drawn attention to this circumstance, hitherto overlooked, but which throws considerable light on the whole story, and he quotes a recipe for the preparation of this singular cosmetic, which is preserved in the Siena Library.

so grievous in the sight of God?" "Because," said she, sobbing and sighing from the bottom of her heart, "I think that at that time I preferred the love of my sister before the love of God; and while I was afraid of offending a silly creature, I offended the Divine Majesty of the everlasting Creator and the sweet Spouse of my soul, Jesus Christ." Then her confessor, desiring to comfort her, said to her, "Although there was some excess, yet considering that it was but little and done for no evil intent, but only for a vain pleasure at that time, I take it, it was not against the commandment of God." When she heard her confessor say so, she lifted up her eyes to heaven, and cried with a loud voice, "O my Lord God, what a ghostly father is this, that excuses my sins?" Then turning to her confessor again, she said, "Father, think you that a vile creature who has received so many graces and gifts of her Creator, of His mere goodness, without any merit on her part, could without sin withdraw any time from the service of such a loving and bountiful Lord, and bestow it upon this miserable carcass?"[1] When he heard these words and saw that they proceeded from a heart inflamed with the love of God, he said no more. Nevertheless, examining into the whole state of her conscience, he takes occasion from this passage of her life to notice how great must have been the purity of that soul which could charge itself with no more heinous offence than the one in question.

Light, however, as her fault might appear in the judgment of the world, it brought with it a certain relaxation of fervour, so that Catherine perceived in herself that she was slacker and colder in her prayers than she had been before. But her Beloved, who would not suffer that His chosen Spouse should, in ever so small a degree, become estranged from His Heart, was pleased to remove out of the way that too natural affection which seemed the only obstacle that could endanger the closeness of her union with Himself. Bonaventura died in the flower of her age, in the August of 1362,[2] and Catherine, more than ever impressed, by

[1] Fen., p. 20.

[2] The date of this event, which fixes the chronology of this part of St.

her sister's death, with the vanity of all earthly ties, devoted herself with renewed fervour to the service of God. Prostrating in the presence of God and uniting herself in spirit with the great penitent St. Mary Magdalene, she wept anew over her infidelity with bitter regret, until at length she deserved to hear those comfortable words spoken by our Lord in her heart, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." And from that day forward she began to bear a special love towards St. Mary Magdalene, and to take her as an example of penance.

The death of Bonaventura was made by her parents the occasion for busying themselves yet more seriously how to bestow Catherine in marriage. But as she opposed a resolute resistance to all such plans, they addressed themselves to Father Thomas della Fonte, a Friar Preacher, and a connection of the family, and besought him to procure her consent. Father Thomas was well known to Catherine. He had, as we have said, been brought up in her father's house, and to him she had confided the history of her first vision. When he found how firm was her will and purpose to devote herself to God, he was far from seeking to oppose her resolution, and instead of arguing with her, offered his advice as to the most prudent manner of acting. "My daughter," he said, "since you are fully resolved to serve God in the holy state of virginity, being called thereto by God Himself, I have no more to say: you have chosen the better part, and may our Lord give you grace to follow it. And now if you think well to follow my counsel, I would advise you to cut off your hair, which will prove to your parents that they must give up all hopes of your marriage, and will also save you the time that must needs be spent upon its care and adornment." Catherine was not slow in following this advice, and that the more willingly as she regarded her beautiful hair with a certain displeasure as having been the occasion to her of the fault she so profoundly

Catherine's life, is thus stated in the Necrology of St. Dominic's Convent: 1362, *Domina Bonaventura filia Jacobi tintoris de Fontebranda, uxor Nicolai Tegghacci, sepulta est die decima Augusti.*" This would make Catherine fifteen years of age at the time of her sister's death.

regretted. Taking a pair of scissors, therefore, she cut it all away, and to conceal what she had done, she covered her head with a coif, contrary to the custom of young maidens of her tender age. When Lapa perceived this, she inquired the reason of her going thus with her head covered; but Catherine, who dared neither to utter a falsehood nor to avow the truth, gave but a faltering and indistinct answer. Then Lapa hastily seized the coif, and as she removed it, beheld her daughter's head bare, and shorn of its golden tresses. On this she raised a cry of anger, which quickly summoned to the spot the rest of the family. They were all much offended with her, and gave her plainly to understand that in spite of her opposition their plans regarding her would not in any wise be abandoned. Catherine appealed to her brothers,[1] assuring them that she cared not how they might deal with her: she desired to be no sort of charge to the family, and would be content to live on bread and water, so that they would consent to leave her in peace; but their pride would not suffer them to yield the point in dispute. It was agreed that her spirit must be conquered, and to effect this, they insisted on a thorough change in her manner of life. Henceforward, it was agreed that she should no longer have any private chamber of her own to which she might resort, but that she should be continually occupied about the household service, so as to have no time left for prayer and meditation. To show how little account they made of her, the kitchen-maid was dismissed, and Catherine was appointed in her place to do all the menial drudgery. Nor was she even left at peace whilst so occupied, but as she went about her work, they constantly reproached her in severe and cutting language, seeking thus to weary out her constancy and force her to yield to their wishes. They even selected a suitable person whom they designed for her husband, and left no means untried to win Catherine's compliance. "But," says her biographer, "her heart was so thoroughly possessed with the love of Christ, her chosen Spouse, that she would not hear of any other. And whereas they had debarred her of a secret place to which

[1] *Miracoli*, p. 11.

she might withdraw herself for prayer and meditation, our merciful Lord taught her, by the inward instinct of His Holy Spirit, how she should build a secret chamber or oratory in her own heart, where she might dwell delightfully with her sweet Spouse so long as she desired, and never be plucked out, whatever befell. And whereas, before, she was forced sometimes to go out of her chamber, and so to be distracted with outward affairs, now, contrariwise, she shut up herself so closely in this cell, and took such passing delight in the presence of her love and joy, Jesus Christ, whose delight it is to dwell in pure hearts, that howsoever they cried and called about her, reproaching her in words or deeds, she passed with all such things so quietly as if they had never been spoken or done to her.

"And as for their abasing her to the vile services of the house, that turned but little to the advantage of the enemy. For when she saw that her father and mother had appointed her to do all the works of drudgery in the kitchen and other places of the house, she never repined at it, but turned it all to her greater merit by this holy imagination. She had this conceit with herself, that her father represented in the house our Saviour Christ; her mother, our Blessed Lady; her brethren, sisters, and others of the family, the apostles and disciples of Christ. The kitchen she imagined to be the innermost tabernacle of the temple, called *sancta sanctorum*, where the principal sacrifices were offered up to God. And with this holy imagination she went up and down the house like a diligent Martha, and in her father, mother, and brethren, served Christ with His blessed Mother and Saints so cheerfully, and with such a glad heart, that the whole house had great wonder of it."[1]

However, as she could not be without some chamber in which to rest, and she was denied any to her own use, she chose to be in her brother Stephen's room, where, when he was away, she might sometimes retire by day, and where also she might pray in the night-time when he was asleep. The sweetness and constancy with which she bore herself under these hard trials began mean-

[1] Fen., 30–32.

while to open the eyes of her parents, and they humbly confessed it to one another, saying, "She has conquered us." Her father in particular, having more spiritual discernment than his wife, began to see that his daughter's conduct had been inspired by something higher than mere stubbornness. This impression was confirmed by an accidental circumstance that happened about this time. One day when Catherine was in her brother's chamber at prayer, leaving the door open (for her father and mother had given her charge that she should be nowhere with the door shut upon her), her father entering into the chamber by chance and seeking something there of his son's that he had need of at that time, found her in a corner kneeling devoutly on her knees; and, casting up his eyes, saw a little white dove sitting over her head, which dove, so soon as he was entered, to his seeming, flew out at the chamber window, at which being somewhat amazed, he asked her what dove that was. "Sir," said she, "I never saw dove nor other bird in the chamber that I know of." When he heard this, he was very much astonished, but kept the matter secretly to himself. Nevertheless, reflecting on what he had seen, and comparing it with the constancy and patience exhibited by his daughter, he was led to conclude that she was truly following the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

At the same time Catherine was permitted more clearly to understand the state of life to which God was pleased to call her. From her very childhood, as we have seen, she had entertained a special love towards the great patriarch, St. Dominic, and a desire to be enrolled among his children. One night as she slept, it seemed to her that she beheld all the founders of the different religious rules, and among them St. Dominic, whom she recognised by his habit and by the lily which he carried in his hand. They appeared to invite her to choose one of their rules in which to serve God for the remainder of her life. Casting her eyes on St. Dominic, that loving father drew near to her, holding in his hand the habit of his Third Order of Penance,[1] and addressed

[1] The Third Order founded by St. Dominic, and called by him the "Militia of Jesus Christ," became known after his death as the "Order of Penance of

her with these consoling words: "Daughter, be of good cheer, fear no obstacle, you shall one day wear this habit."

The comfort she received from this assurance was so great, that the next day she assembled her parents and brothers, and addressed them with no less grace than courage in the following terms:—"It is now a long time since you began to treat with me that I should marry with some mortal man, which talk, however much I abhorred, I never declared plainly but concealed it in part, for the reverence that I bear you. But now I may no longer hold my peace, and therefore I must open my heart and purpose to you in plain words. I have made a full resolution and promise to my Lord and Saviour, and to His most glorious Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, that I will serve them all the days of my life in the pure and holy state of virginity, and I give you to understand that this is no new thing, or lately come upon me, but a thing that I have desired even from my infancy, being moved thereto not by any childish lightness, but after careful thought and not without evident tokens of the will of God; therefore I have vowed that I will never incline my heart to accept any other husband, but only Him. Now, then, being come, by His gracious goodness, to the years of discretion, I thought it my duty to tell you in express terms, that thus much I have, by the will of God, faithfully promised, and thus much I will, by the grace of God, truly observe. This purpose is so deeply imprinted in my soul, that it will be more easy to make a hard flint soft than to take this resolution out of my heart. Wherefore, I humbly beseech you, lose no more time in treating with me about marriage, for in this matter I may not condescend to your request, because I

St. Dominic." It included members of both sexes, and B. Andrea Gallerani, the founder of the Casa della Misericordia, is called by some the first Dominican Tertiary. The Sisters were not cloistered nuns bound by the three vows of religion, though in process of time regular communities were formed among them. As originally founded they lived in their own houses, one of their own members who bore the title of Prioress governing them according to their rule, under the direction of the Friars. The Dominican Sisters of Penance were at this time very numerous in Siena; and in 1352, a hundred of them voluntarily bound themselves to wear the habit even until death.

have plighted my faith and truth to Jesus Christ alone, whose love I must prefer before all earthly creatures. If it shall please you to keep me in your house, with this condition, as your common servant, I will serve you willingly and obediently to the uttermost of my power. If you think, by putting me out of your house, to force me to yield to your command for lack of necessary provision, assure yourselves no such fear can alter my mind in this matter. For I have chosen Him for my Spouse who giveth food to all living creatures, and who will not suffer them that repose themselves with confidence in His goodness to be destitute of necessary things."

These words were said with such grace and modesty that those who heard her were struck to the heart, and so overcome with tears, that for a good space they were unable to give her one word for answer. At last Giacomo, who was a good man and full of the fear of God, and who moreover called to mind the dove which only a day or two before he had seen over her head, and the other tokens of heavenly favour which he had observed in her behaviour, mastered his emotion so far as to be able to reply: "Dearest daughter," he said, "God forbid that we should desire anything contrary to the will of God, from whom this determination of yours proceeds. Your patience and constancy sufficiently declare to us that this your choice comes from no caprice, but from a fervent love of God. In His name, therefore, follow freely what you have vowed; from this day forth none in this house shall hinder you. Only pray for us to your heavenly Spouse that we may be found worthy of the eternal life which He has promised." Then turning to his wife and his other children, he continued, "From this day forward let none be so bold as to molest my daughter's freedom; for in truth the alliance she has chosen is more honourable for us than that which we sought to accomplish. We have no cause to complain of what she has done, she has made a fair exchange. She has refused to be matched with a mortal man, and has chosen to be espoused to the immortal God and man, Christ Jesus." When he had finished speaking, Lapa still wept, for she loved her daughter sensibly;

and it seemed to her that it was hard to renounce the worldly hopes regarding her on which she had set her heart; but Catherine rejoiced with unspeakable gladness, and from that hour had no other care in her heart than how she might best make profit of the liberty that had been granted to her.

CHAPTER III

Catherine Enters the Order of Penance, 1363, 1364

AFTER having obtained from her parents the freedom of serving God according to her desire, Catherine set herself to order her life after an entirely new manner; and first she begged to have some room to herself, no matter how mean or inconvenient it might be. The chamber assigned her, and of which she joyfully took possession, was a little cell under her father's house, no more than five metres long and three in width. It was lighted by one small window to which a few brick steps led up, the remains of which may still be seen, and on which it is said she often rested her head when sleeping. Here she retired as into the solitude of a desert, giving herself up to rigorous penance and uninterrupted prayer. Up to this time, as Lapa would often testify, Catherine was possessed of unusual physical strength, so that she had no difficulty in taking a horse load on her shoulders and running with it up two flights of stairs to the attics. But this robust temperament soon gave way under the austerities to which she now subjected herself. From this time she entirely abstained from flesh-meat, as well as from all kinds of sweet or savoury things, so that in process of time it became impossible for her to swallow them without extreme suffering. Wine also she renounced, drinking nothing but pure water. And she went on daily retrenching some new article of food till she came at last to take only a little bread and some raw herbs, and even these she swallowed with difficulty. A few planks composed her bed, with a log of wood for her pillow. She wore a rough haircloth which, from a motive of cleanliness, she afterwards exchanged for

an iron chain;[1] she also gradually prolonged her night-watches till she so entirely overcame the disposition to sleep, as to allow herself no more than half-an-hour of repose, and that only every other day; but as she afterwards acknowledged to F. Raymund, no victory over nature had cost her so dearly as this.

When her mother became aware of these practices, she was greatly concerned, and set herself to do what she could to soften the rigour of Catherine's austerities. In particular she entreated her for a time to give up her hard bed and to come and sleep with her. Catherine would not vex her mother by a refusal, and accompanied her therefore to her chamber, but with no intention of giving herself any extra indulgence. When her mother was laid in one side of the bed, she went and laid herself down in the other side, where she continued watching in prayer and meditation, until at length perceiving her mother to be fast asleep, she rose up softly, without making any noise, and applied herself to her wonted exercises. But Lapa, whose mother's heart was ever wakeful, soon discovered her daughter's stratagems and took them in very ill part. Whereupon Catherine, who had always a great care to do nothing that might grieve her mother, hit on a new device, by which she thought she might both satisfy her mother's mind and exercise in some degree her accustomed discipline. She took two pieces of wood and put them secretly into the bed, under the sheet, on the side where she should lie, and laid herself down upon the same. But it was not so privately done but that the mother, who had a great jealousy of all her doings, within a short time found it out. So when she saw that, however diligent and careful she was to qualify the rigour of her daughter's life, she would, on the other side, be as inventive to find means of continuing the same; as one overcome, she gave it up, and said to her: "Daughter, I see well it boots not to strive with you any

[1] Portions of her hair-shirt are preserved in the chapel of the Fullonica, and elsewhere. The iron chain is kept in the Sacristy of San Domenico. It originally possessed twenty-four links, but several have been given away to various Dominican convents. Three were sent in 1714 to the Church of St. Catherine at Leghorn. The discipline, also made of iron chains armed with points, is kept in the Sacristy of San Domenico.

longer, I do but lose my labour. Wherefore, in God's name, go your way and take your rest in your own chamber at what time and in what manner you may think best."[1] And she resolved to make no further attempt to control her. But from this resolution she was soon moved by a fresh discovery. Catherine had a great desire to imitate her holy father, St. Dominic, in his triple disciplines, and following his example she was wont to chastise her body three times every day with a discipline made of iron chains garnished with sharp points, offering this penance the first time for her own sins, the second time for the souls of others, and the third for the dead. These disciplines lasted for an hour and a half at a time, and were so severe that the blood flowed abundantly. One day when Lapa chanced to be near the chamber she heard the sound of blows, and entering suddenly, beheld the piteous sight; on which, losing all command over herself, she raised such a cry that the neighbours came running in to see what ailed her, and so were witnesses with her of the rigorous penances of her daughter.

All this time Catherine had not forgotten the promise given her in her dream, that she should one day receive the habit of Penance of the Blessed Dominic. Day and night she prayed that the happy day might soon appear which should bring the accomplishment of her wishes. And fearing that until she had taken this step she should never be quite safe from molestation on the part of her family, she herself begged her mother to intercede for her with the *Mantellate* (as the Sisters of the Third Order were then commonly called), that they would admit her to their number. This petition was very unwelcome to Lapa, and to divert her thoughts into another channel, she proposed that Catherine should accompany her to some hot baths in the neighbourhood of Siena, hoping that by forcing her thus to take some recreation she might win her over to give up her present severe manner of life, as well as her plans for the future. Catherine made no difficulty in agreeing to her mother's request, and they set out for the baths, which are supposed to have been those of

[1] Fen., p. 44.

Vignone, on the right bank of the Orcia.[1] But she had no thought of giving herself any bodily indulgence. On the contrary, she took occasion of this visit to the baths to practise a new kind of penance. She begged her mother that they might enter the bath alone; and Lapa willingly consenting, having no suspicion of her daughter's intention, she went and placed herself under the spout where the sulphureous water came scalding hot into the bath, and there suffered patiently greater pains from the heat of the water, than she was wont to do at home when she beat herself with the iron chain. When her mother perceived this, and saw that whatever she devised for the comfort of her daughter was, by her contrivance, turned to a contrary end, she determined to return home, but failed not on the road to make Catherine understand how much she was displeased with these excessive penances. Catherine never argued the point with her mother; she listened to all she had to say with modesty and in silence, but it did not still the voice of God which sounded in her heart, and drew her by a powerful attraction to a life of heroic sacrifice, of which Lapa little understood the secret. Caffarini tells us that as they returned from the baths, it was observed that she walked with her eyes shut, her mind abstracted from the bodily senses and wholly absorbed in God. "As I, who write," he continues, "have many times seen her walk, and if I had not seen it, I never could have believed it."[2]

The suffering which Catherine had endured at the baths proved the immediate occasion of her long-cherished desire being granted. On her return home she pressed her mother to undertake her suit with the Sisters of Penance, and overcome with her importunity, poor Lapa at last complied; and going to the Sisters, presented her daughter's request. It met at first with no success. They answered that it was not their custom to receive young

[1] There was a chapel here in St. Catherine's time, dedicated to St. Catherine the Martyr, as we learn from a survey of Siena made in 1334 by Simon da Fondi. This chapel was rebuilt in 1660, and dedicated to St. Catherine of Siena.

[2] Caff., Leg. Min., cap. 7.

maidens among them, but only widows of mature years, who might be expected to behave with becoming gravity; because not living in community or keeping enclosure, it was necessary to exercise great prudence in the admission of members. Lapa returned with this answer to her daughter, who was not discouraged, but entreated her mother to try again, which she did, but with no better result than before. Meanwhile Catherine fell sick, her malady being partly caused, as it would seem, by her adventure at the baths. Lapa, who tenderly loved her child, was overcome with sorrow, and watched by her sick-bed with unremitting care. Catherine profited of the occasion to win from her mother the promise that she would make a third appeal to the Sisters of Penance. "If you wish me to recover health," she said, "obtain for me this favour; otherwise, be well assured that God and St. Dominic will take me from you altogether."

At such a moment Lapa could refuse her nothing, and once more returning to the Sisters she pressed her request with such importunity, that they were in a manner forced to yield consent. "If your daughter," said they, "be not over fair we are content to receive her. If she be, the malice of the world is such that you would hazard the good name, both of your daughter and all of us, and, therefore, we could in no wise receive her." On which the mother answered saying, "Come, yourselves, and judge whether she be fair or no." They sent therefore two discreet matrons, chosen from among themselves, to examine both her personal appearance and her dispositions of mind. On coming to the house they found Catherine lying on her bed, and so altered by sickness that they were satisfied her beauty was at any rate not excessive. By her words, however, they judged that she had a most fervent desire to serve God, and were greatly astonished at the wisdom which appeared in one of such tender years. And so, taking their leave, they went home to the rest of their company, and declared to them what they had heard and seen. Upon this report, the Sisters communicated the matter to the Brethren of the Order, and that done, resolved with full consent to receive her to the habit, sending word to Lapa, that so soon as her

daughter was recovered, she should bring her to them without longer delay.[1] At these tidings Catherine wept for very joy, and gave thanks to God and St. Dominic; praying that her recovery might be hastened, so that she might speedily be fit to receive the holy habit. In fact, the joy of her heart seemed to give back health to her body, so that the malady from which she had been suffering rapidly disappeared. But the enemy was allowed to assail her constancy by one more trial, which is thus related by Caffarini in his Supplement:—"One day towards the close of evening, not long before the holy virgin obtained the habit of St. Dominic, as she was shut up in the chamber which her father had given her, praying after her custom before the crucifix, the evil spirit appeared to her in a form rather pleasing than terrifying, bringing with him a quantity of rich dresses and stuff of the finest silk which he displayed before her, whilst he tried with flattering words to induce her to accept them. Catherine repulsed him with scorn and drove him away; but as he disappeared she felt herself for the first time assaulted by a strange temptation. There arose within her a violent desire to go forth and show herself abroad, dressed not only in the gay attire commonly worn by girls at her age, but in the more luxurious costume which at that time was adopted by newly-married women. Tormented by the presence of so odious a temptation, she turned to the crucifix, saying, "My sweetest Lord, you know I have never desired a mortal spouse; help me in this trial, I ask not to be delivered from it, but to have strength to overcome." As she prayed, there appeared to her our Blessed Lady, who showed her a garment of dazzling richness, which she had drawn out of that casket of all treasures, the wounded side of her Divine Son. And as she clothed Catherine with this inestimable robe, she said to her, "My daughter, know this, that the garments drawn from the side of my Son surpass in beauty all that can be fashioned by the hand of man."[2]

Her reception of the holy habit of St. Dominic took place on a Sunday, in the chapel assigned to the use of the Sisters in the

[1] Fen., p. 54.

[2] Sup., Part 1, Trat. 1, § 4.

Church of St. Dominic, commonly called *Delle Volte.* The date of this event is not given by Raymund, and we have no means by which to fix it precisely, but it was probably about the year 1364.[1] He merely tells us that the ceremony took place according to the accustomed form, in the presence of the Brethren and the Sisters. Catherine's name is twice inscribed in their register, once as "Katerina Jacobi Benincasa," and a second time as "Catherina di Lapa." From that day, according to the custom of the Sisters, she constantly wore the white veil and habit and the black mantle of the Order, from which they received the vulgar name of the "Mantellate." This "black mantle of humility" was specially dear to Catherine. Her secretary, Neri di Landoccio, writing to Caffarini, told him that she always regarded the mantle in which she was first dedicated to her Spouse as a most precious thing, and was accustomed to say, "It shall never be taken from me." If it was ever torn, she would patch and mend it with her own hands, for she would say, "I wish it to last after I am gone." Yet dearly as she loved her mantle, she once parted with it at the call of charity. "One day," says Stephen Maconi in his letter to Caffarini, which is inserted in the Process, "as she was setting out with her companions, she met a poor person who begged an alms with much importunity. She said to him, 'I assure you, my dear brother, that I have no money.' 'But,' said he, 'you could give me that mantle.' 'That is true,' said Catherine, giving it to him. Those who accompanied her had much difficulty in redeeming the mantle, because the poor man made them pay very dear for it; and when they asked her how she could resolve to walk out without the mantle of her Order, she replied in these noble words: '*I would rather be without my mantle than without charity.*'"

[1] P. Capecelatro, who is followed by M. Cartier, supposes her to have received the habit of Penance so early as 1362. But this is manifestly impossible, as Bonaventura's death did not take place until the August of that year, so that under this supposition all the subsequent events narrated above would have occupied no more than four months.

On her deathbed the saint left this mantle as a legacy to her first confessor, F. Thomas Della Fonte, from whose hands she had probably received it. He left it when dying to his niece, Catherine Cothi, also one of the Mantellate, and she gave it as a sacred relic to F. Thomas Caffarini. By him it was carried to Venice in 1398, where many persons out of devotion chose to be invested with it when received into the Third Order. It was long kept by the Sisters of Penance of that city in a chest of gilt wood, and was the means of working many cures both corporal and spiritual.

CHAPTER IV

Catherine in Solitude, 1364–1366

"ON the same day that Catherine received the holy habit of Penance," says Caffarini,[1] "she entered her little chamber and began to meditate on the strange and sorrowful problem how men could love and follow after the perishable things of this world, whilst the voice of God was ever inviting them to taste of His consolations. As she so pondered, there appeared before the eyes of her soul a magnificent tree loaded with the richest fruit, but hedged about with prickly thorns that made it difficult to approach. Not far from the tree was a fair hill covered with ears of golden corn, but the ears, though beautiful to look upon, were black and foul within, and withered at the touch. Some persons came and gazed at the tree, admiring its beauty, but when they saw the hedge of sharp thorns they feared to approach, and turned aside to satisfy themselves with the empty ears of corn that poisoned those who ate them. Others more courageous pierced the hedge and reached the foot of the tree, but perceiving how high its branches were from the ground, they too lost courage, and made choice of the withered ears. Only a few were found who feared neither the sharp thorns nor the fatigue of climbing, and these, mounting the lofty branches, ate the delicious fruit, which after once tasting they lost all relish for earthly food."

Catherine understood the vision well, and long ago she had made her choice. The blasted ears of worldly pleasure with all

[1] Sup., Part 1, Trat. 1, § 5.

their gilded show had no charms for her, neither did the sharp thorns of penance or the labour of perseverance present any terrors to her heroic soul. For one brief moment in her early childhood Heaven had been open to her gaze, and her election had been irrevocably made. Now, therefore, that she found herself clothed with the holy garb of religion, her only thought was, how most completely to die to the world and give herself to God. Though it was not the custom for Tertiaries to bind themselves by the three vows of religion, yet she fully purposed in her heart to live thenceforward according to their spirit. Her vow of perpetual chastity had long since been pronounced; and so precise was her observance of the obedience due to her superiors, that when she came to die she was able to say that she had never knowingly transgressed it. As to poverty, she neither possessed nor desired to possess anything superfluous. The prosperity enjoyed by her father and brothers, whose affairs were at this time in a flourishing condition, was far from pleasing to her. "Thou knowest, Lord," she would say, "that these are not the goods I desire for my family." She even besought Almighty God that if it were for their greater spiritual profit, this abundance of earthly things might be taken from them; and it seemed that her prayer was granted, for in the end, through no fault of theirs, they were reduced to great penury. Although not bound then by the obligation of religious vows, Catherine practised with the greatest exactitude the virtues which they prescribe; whilst the rule of life which she now embraced probably surpassed in strictness that of the most austere cloister. She began by imposing on herself a rigorous law of silence. F. Thomas Della Fonte left it written in his notes of her life, that for three years after her entrance into the Third Order she never spoke save in confession, and never left the house except to go to the church. Probably this rule admitted of certain relaxations, for it was during this period of retirement that she made the acquaintance of F. Thomas Caffarini and F. Bartholomew of St. Dominic, who visited her from time to time in the company of her Confessor, "without whose leave, however," says F. Bartholomew, "she never spoke to any man

except her father and her brothers."[1] And thus, in the words of her old biographer, "she contrived to find out a wilderness in the midst of the city, and to make for herself a solitary place where there was great resort of people." Her prayer was all but continual, and she loved to unite it in spirit with the choral offices of the Order to which she belonged. The Church of St. Dominic was close to the Fullonica, and Catherine from her chamber could catch the sound of its bell calling the brethren to choir at the appointed hours. She so arranged her time as to watch while the friars were sleeping; and when she heard the second toll for midnight matins she would address her Divine Spouse, saying, "Lord, until now my brethren have slept and I have watched for them in Thy presence, praying Thee to guard them from the wiles of the enemy; now that they are rising to offer Thee their praises, suffer me to take a little repose." And then she would lie down to her scanty rest.

Her Divine Spouse was not willing to leave her without necessary direction in the arduous course she had embraced; but He chose neither man nor angel for the purpose: He deigned Himself to be her teacher; so that from this time began that wonderful intercourse between Catherine and her Beloved, the closeness of which, says F. Raymund, can be compared to nothing but the familiar intimacy of two friends. She herself so described it: "Father," she said, "take this for a certain truth, that I was never taught the rule of spiritual life by any man or woman, but only by my Lord and Master Jesus Christ, who made it known to me either by secret inspiration or else appearing openly to me and speaking to me as I now speak to you." She declared also, that in the beginning, her visions were for the most part only wrought in the imagination; but they were afterwards sensible, so that she saw with her eyes the Form that appeared to her, and heard with her ears the sound of the Voice that spoke. At first she feared, doubting the illusions of the

[1] Process, fol. 139, 140. The seeming contradiction is clearly enough explained by Raymund when he says that our Lord "*gradually* introduced Catherine to the active life." Leg., Part 2, cap. 1.

enemy; but our Lord, whilst commending her prudence, gave her certain notes and tokens by which she might always discern between the true visions of God and the deceits of Satan. "Daughter," He said, "it were an easy matter for Me to inform thy soul inwardly with the secret instinct of My Spirit, so that thou shouldst at all times discern perfectly and without error between true visions and counterfeit illusions; but because My will is to profit others as well as thee, therefore I will teach thee a general rule and lesson, which is this: My vision beginneth evermore with fear and dread, but in process of time setteth a soul in great joy, quietness, and security. It beginneth with some kind of bitterness, but in continuance it waxeth more delightful and sweet. The visions of the enemy are contrary, for in the beginning they show a kind of security and gladness, but in process they turn to fear and bitterness, which increase afterwards and wax greater and greater. And it standeth with good reason, because My ways and the ways of the enemy have this special difference: My ways are the keeping of the commandments in perfection of a virtuous and godly life. These seem at the beginning to be full of difficulty; but in time they become easy and pleasant. But the ways of the enemy are the transgressing of My commandments in the liberty of the flesh and licentiousness of life, which seem at the beginning to be delightful and pleasant; but in continuance of time they prove, in very deed, dangerous and painful. Take this also for a most certain and infallible rule to discern between true and false visions; because I am Truth, it cannot be otherwise than that the soul of man must needs, by My visions, receive a greater knowledge of truth; by which he cometh to understand both his own baseness and the worthiness of God, and so consequently to do due honour and reverence to God, and to make little account of himself, which is the proper condition of humility. The contrary happeneth in the visions of the enemy; for he, being the father of lies and king over all the children of pride, can give none other thing but only what he hath; and therefore in his visions there must needs ensue in a soul ignorance and error, whereby it con-

ceiveth a false esteem of itself, which is the proper condition of pride. Therefore by this thou mayest know if thy visions be from Me or from the enemy; of Truth or of falsehood: if they come of Truth they will make thy soul humble, if they come of falsehood they will make thee proud."[1]

Dating then from this period, Catherine's union with her Divine Spouse became uninterrupted; never was she separated from His presence; but whether she prayed or read, whether she watched or slept, He was ever with her. There was not a part of the church which she frequented which was not marked by some gracious manifestation of His watchful tenderness; her little chamber and the garden[2] attached to her father's house were all filled with memories of this unspeakable intercourse. Truly it might be said of her that "she walked with God." "On her lips and in her heart," says Caffarini, "she had nothing but Jesus: in the streets she walked with Jesus; her eyes were set to look on Jesus only; never were they open out of curiosity to behold any other objects unless they were such as might lead her to Jesus, and thus it was that she was so often rapt in wonderful ecstasies and abstractions of mind."[3]

Nor was this union weakened or obscured in after years by her converse with the world; but when outwardly speaking with men, her heart was always inwardly engaged with God, and in this lay the secret of that marvellous power which she exercised over all who approached her. Flesh and blood, however, could not long sustain such closeness with Divine things without a suspension of the faculties and a wasting of bodily strength, and these supernatural graces were the origin of that state of bodily suffering and incapacity for food which made the remainder of her life a daily martyrdom.

Among the precious lessons which she received at this time there was one which must be regarded as the foundation-stone

[1] Fen., Part I, cap. 17.

[2] This garden now forms the site of the Church of the Confraternity of Sta. Catherina in Fontebranda.

[3] Sup,, Part I, Trat. 2, § II.

of her whole spiritual edifice, and which is thus narrated and expanded by her biographer. One day as she was praying, our Lord appeared to her and said: "Daughter, knowest thou what thou art, and what I am? If thou perfectly know this truth thou art blessed. Give heed then to My words, that thou mayest be able to understand it. Thou art she that is not, and I am He who am. Art thou not she that was made out of nothing? forasmuch as every creature is made out of nothing, and has no being save in My Almighty power, and evermore of itself tends to nothing. Now if a man were thoroughly persuaded of this, that in truth he were nothing, how could he be proud, or how could he glory in himself or in any of his works, if he knew that he had nothing of his own but defects and sin? But because if he considered this truth alone he would fall away into despair, therefore is it needful also that he know that I am He that am. God only is, of Himself. He alone is unchangeable and incorruptible. The creature, therefore, that sees this, and knows that he can have no being in himself, or find any good or blessedness in himself or any other creature, turns himself to God and beholds Him, the Creator and Preserver of all things, Who maintains all things in their being and blessedness, the everlasting spring and fountain of all goodness, Who alone is able to slake the thirst of his natural desires and longings. And so beholding Him, the creature begins to sigh towards Him and to be inflamed with the love of Him. And he conceives a certain holy fear, which is the guardian of the soul, so that he will not suffer the least motion in his heart which could offend so sweet and bountiful a Master. And he rests so firmly on the provident goodness of God that no adversity disturbs him, because he knows that Almighty God permits it for his salvation; and he understands that there is no labour or sorrow in this world, however grievous, that can be compared to the glorious reward which he looks for from the hands of God."

This steadfast trust in the providence of God was also taught her by another of these Divine words. "Think of Me," He said, "and I will think of thee!" which words she understood as though He had said: "Have no thought or care of thyself either

for soul or body, because I who know better what is good for thee will think and provide for all thy necessities. Be careful only to think on Me, for in that is thy perfection and beatitude." It cannot be expressed with what joy and confidence Catherine henceforth dwelt on those words, "I will think of thee." She never wearied of speaking of them, and they formed the text and chief subject-matter of the treatise which she afterwards composed on Divine Providence. If at any time she saw any of her companions troubled or preoccupied by some vexation, "Leave all to God," she would say; "what have you to do of yourselves? For you to bestow care about these things is to take from God His care and providence, as though He could not or would not provide."

She would often speak with her Confessor on the state of a soul that is united to God in perfect charity. "A soul that loves God perfectly," she would say, "ends by forgetting herself and all other creatures. Such a soul, seeing that of herself she is nothing, and that all her being depends on God, in Whom alone, and in no creature, she finds by experience that her happiness must rest, forsakes both herself and all things to plunge herself as it were into the love of Him, directing to Him all her works, and thoughts, and powers. Without Him she cares not to be, because in Him she finds all that can delight the heart, all beauty, all sweetness, all quietness, and all peace. And so, the bond of love between her and God drawing closer, she comes as it were to be wholly transformed in Him. And at length it comes to pass that she can love, delight, think, and remember no other thing than Him only. All other creatures she loves and considers in Him, even as a man who dives and swims under the water sees and feels nothing which is not either the water or what is contained in the water; and even if he sees anything that is out of the water, he sees it not properly as it is in itself, but as the likeness of it appears in the water. A soul thus plunged in the love of God hates herself as much as she loves Him. She sees that her own sensuality is the root and origin of all sin, and the cause of her separation from God, her Supreme End. Therefore on that

account she conceives a certain holy hatred of her own inclinations and a desire to kill the root of them, which is self-love. And because the root of this self-love lies so deep that it cannot utterly be removed, but something will still remain which from time to time will molest her, therefore there daily grows in her this holy hatred and contempt of self, which increases her desire to advance nearer to God; and for His love she is ready to endure the sharpest discipline that may subdue that proneness to sin which keeps her back from her desired joy." All her disciples notice how frequently she dwelt on this lesson of "holy hatred," and how often she would quote the saying of St. Bernard, "Destroy self-love, and there will be no more hell." It was a lesson that lay at the root of her whole interior life, and will be found embodied in that abridgment of her Spiritual Doctrine which was taken down from her lips at a later period by her English Confessor, F. William Flete.[1]

As in her words, so also in her writings, the same truth returns again and again. She saw in the disorder of self-love the great antagonist of the love of God, "the root of all vices, which has poisoned the entire world and stricken the mystical Body of Christ as with a pestilence."[2] And she understood that it was the business of a loving soul to make war on this great rebel and deliver it to death by the relentless practice of mortification. She would not tolerate the idea that there is any state of the soul, however exalted, in which the warfare with our own passions can ever be relaxed, and regarded it as a deadly delusion to suppose that this is only a practice for beginners. Hence in her Dialogue, after describing various sublime stages of the spiritual life, she concludes with the emphatic warning, that "there is no condition of the soul in which it ceases to be necessary for a man to put his own self-love to death."[3]

Following the course of our history we shall presently have to relate some of those wonderful favours granted to Catherine in her solitary cell, which have been recorded by Raymund and her

[1] For a translation of this precious document see Appendix A.

[2] Dialogo, cap. 7.

[3] Ibid., cap. 56.

other confessors. But lest any should gather from such narratives the notion that St. Catherine's ecstatic life rested on a different basis, and was subject to wholly different conditions from the spiritual life, as we understand the term, it will be profitable, in addition to what has been said above, to gather from the writings of those who knew her longest and best a few most significant facts as to her ordinary manner of prayer. First, then, we learn from the evidence of F. Thomas Caffarini, whose acquaintance with her began as early as the year 1366, that it was her habitual practice to meditate on the life of our Lord. "I witnessed," he says, "how she prolonged her vigils till matins, meditating, according to her custom, principally on the life of Christ and the truths of the Gospel."[1] And in his Supplement he relates, how "going one day into the church of the Friars Preachers *to meditate there at her leisure on the mysteries of our Lord's Incarnation*, she was suddenly illuminated by a Divine revelation."[2] And again, "she was sweetly and powerfully drawn to an affectionate love and compassion for the sufferings of Christ, *meditating on which* she found comfort and refreshment for her soul whenever it was afflicted. This was the real secret of her victories over the enemy, and she was never weary of recommending to others the practice of continual prayer. In truth, her own prayer may be said to have been continual, for there never was a moment that she was not thinking of God." These meditations were fed by spiritual reading; her most constant study, after she learnt to read, being the Holy Gospels, on which she composed a devout treatise, now unhappily lost."[3]

Next, it may be observed, that much as she valued meditation, she did not despise vocal prayer. Besides her recital of the Divine office, of which we shall speak hereafter, she was accustomed to the frequent use of ejaculations, one of those most familiar to her being the words, "*Peccavi, Domine, miserere mei.*" These words, says Caffarini, "she always used at the end of her

[1] Process, fol. 18. [2] Sup., Part 1, Trat. 1, § 9.

[3] Quoted by Gigli from the deposition of F. Thomas Caffarini. I have been unable, however, to verify the passage in the Process.

prayers, folding her hands and bowing her head," and the habit of a lifetime showed itself upon her deathbed, when we are told she used this same ejaculation "more than sixty times." "She did not care," says F. Bartholomew of St. Dominic, "to pray much at a time, but in praying or reading she would, as it were, ruminate each word, dwelling upon it, and finding in it something to feed her soul with spiritual savour; and in this manner she came at last to be unable to say one Our Father without being rapt in ecstasy."[1]

Moreover, her prayer, if sublime, was also simple and practical. "Catherine never ceased to pray for the virtues," says Caffarini,[2] "and specially for true and perfect charity." At one time, before a season of temptation, we find her inspired by God to pray for fortitude, and at another for purity of heart. During her whole life she constantly made use of the prayer of petition, asking particular graces for herself, or for others, and persevering in her requests a long time together. She would address our Lord with sighs and tears, saying with filial confidence, "Lord, I will not stir from your feet till your goodness has granted me what I desire." But she often said that she dared not so pray, unless she knew by manifest tokens that what she asked was in conformity with the will of God."[3]

The third point to be noticed, as full of encouragement, is that St. Catherine's growth in prayer and in the spiritual life was *gradual and progressive.* Prevented by grace, as she manifestly was, even from her infancy, she was yet, not all at once and without labour, raised to the heights of contemplation. "In her heart she disposed to ascend by steps;" and she passed "from virtue to virtue."[4] This is apparent from many expressions of Raymund, as well as from the spiritual instruction she dictated to F. William Flete. But it may suffice to quote here a passage from the Supplement of Caffarini, as being less generally known:—

"On a certain feast of the Holy Cross, as she was meditating on the immense love of Jesus Christ displayed in His Passion,

[1] Process, 140.
[2] Sup., Part 1, Trat. 1, § 12.
[3] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 3, § 14.
[4] Ps. lxxxiii. 6, 7.

she felt herself washed from head to foot in that Precious Blood shed by Him for our redemption. Then our Lord appeared to her carrying a cross of gold, and said to her, 'Daughter, take this Cross and follow Me.' She obeyed promptly; but when she had taken a few steps she met another cross, higher and larger, on which our Lord mounted, saying, 'Approach thy lips to the wound of My side.' And when she had done so with ineffable consolation, He took her by the hand and drew her higher, till her face rested upon the Face of her Beloved. Then He gave her to understand that by these three steps were signified three states of the soul, concluding with these words: 'When thou shalt have reached the third, or last degree, thou shalt enjoy My Divine embrace with quiet and tranquillity, for so I render My chosen ones blessed even before I call them to My kingdom.' And Catherine having been guided, while yet a young girl, through the first and second degrees, found herself at last at the third, or supreme degree of union with God which is described in Holy Writ under the figure of an embrace, or 'the Kiss of His Mouth.' Thence she obtained the grace, even whilst living in this world, of an unalterable peace and tranquillity; never feeling her heart disturbed, though struck down by many sicknesses, attacked by cruel calumnies, and worn out with fatigues and responsibilities far beyond her age and sex. She desired nothing save to be released from the bondage of the flesh that she might be united to her Spouse. But He, designing to employ her in affairs of importance for the service of Holy Church, deferred for a time the fulfilment of her desires. She mitigated the sadness which from time to time made itself felt, by resignation to the Divine decrees, knowing that one day, at any rate, she should die and pass to His presence; and therefore it was that she so willingly employed herself in burying the dead, showing great signs of joy whenever she learnt the happy departure out of this world of some soul who had lived a holy life."[1]

But when all has been said that can be said to exhibit this great Saint as using the same methods of prayer and exercises of

[1] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 2, § 3.

perfection as are common to the faithful, and as raised to her exalted sanctity only by progressive steps, there yet remains the fact, declared in the Bull of her Canonisation, that her doctrine was "not acquired but infused." Caffarini says she had attained that highest degree of contemplation, of which St. Thomas affirms that its fruits are "light in the intellect and love in the heart.' When she came out of her ecstasies, he says, she spoke with so wonderful an intelligence of Divine things that she seemed to know more than the wisest doctors; but all her illumination was from God.

Of this sublime light she has written admirably in her Dialogue, describing it as a ray proceeding from the fire of charity. "Proud ignorance remains blind to this light because its eye is clouded by self-love. Such souls can never penetrate beyond the letter of the Scriptures: they may read much and turn over many books, but the pith and marrow they never taste. They wonder to see the simple and illiterate possessed of a clearer knowledge than they of spiritual things, but there is nothing to wonder at in it, because these humble souls are illuminated by grace, which is the true source of knowledge."[1] "What Catherine taught," says Raymund, "she had learnt by experience, like the disciple of whom St. Denys, the Areopagite, speaks." He is referring to a passage in the works of St. Denys, which runs as follows:— "Hierotheus learned these things, instructed by some special inspiration, having not only *learned, but also experienced, Divine things, and being fashioned by such teaching of the heart* (if I may so express it) to that faith and mystic union which can never be acquired by any human lessons."[2]

Let us now take a glance at that little cell where Catherine, alone with her Divine Spouse, was "being fashioned by this teaching of the heart;" and to do so we shall but gather up the words of those who shared her confidence, and who themselves were witnesses of the marvels they described. It was a life of

[1] Dialogo, cap. 85.

[2] De Div. Nom., cap. 2. The exact sense of the original is, that "Divine things came upon him without his action."

mingled penance and ecstasy. "Every evening, for many years, when it began to grow dusk," says Caffarini, "she felt herself drawn by an irresistible force to God, passing into a rapture which generally lasted six hours, during which time she conversed with the Eternal Wisdom, her bodily senses remaining suspended."[1] Another time, we read, how standing one night at the window and gazing up into heaven, she thought of the Divine Beauty which she saw reflected in the heavenly orbs; when suddenly from the blue vault above her there came a sound of exquisite melody, such as mortal ear had never heard, which rapt her in ecstasy, filling her with the joys of Paradise.[2] Once as she prayed for the virtue of charity, and understood that her prayer was granted, she was so overwhelmed with the sweetness of the Divine Presence that for ten days she could neither eat nor drink, nor engage in her ordinary occupations.[3] Another time, when in like manner she had continued praying a long time for purity of heart, an angel appeared bearing a garland of spotless lilies which he placed as a crown upon her head. The beauty and fragrance of these lilies was so unearthly that she declared the mere thought of that precious garland sufficed to cause her a kind of rapture. Occasionally we catch sight of that same love of the Office of the Church which was so remarkable in St. Gertrude. On the first Vespers of a certain feast of St. Lucy she seemed to see all Paradise preparing to celebrate the festival, and full of joy, she ran to the church, desiring to have the bells rung that the Church on earth might take part with the Church in Heaven. Our Lord was pleased that her wish should be accomplished without causing the people any astonishment, for suddenly the sky clouded over and announced the approach of a tempest, and, according to the custom of the times, the church bells were rung to exorcise the powers of the air. When they ceased Catherine seemed to hear solemn vespers sung in heaven by a choir of virgins, led by one of surpassing beauty, to whom all paid homage. The privilege of listening to the chants of Paradise was often granted to her.[4]

[1] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 3, § 8.
[2] Ibid., Part 1, Trat. 2, § 6.
[3] Ibid., Part 1, Trat. 2, § 12.
[4] Ibid., Part 1, Trat. 2, § 20.

On the 11th of January one year she was permitted to hear the heavenly canticles of the Saints and Angels, and speaking of this to her Confessor, she told him that these blessed spirits did not all sing in unison, but those sang in the highest key and the most sonorous voices who on earth had most ardently loved the Supreme Goodness. She specially distinguished the voices of St. John the Evangelist and St. Mary Magdalen, though she confessed herself unable to understand the meaning of what she heard. As she was still speaking, she stopped to listen; "Father," she said, "do you not hear with what a high sweet voice the blessed Magdalen sings in the choir of the Saints?" And she remained listening intently as if she heard the heavenly music even with her bodily ears.[1]

The memory of this favour was probably in her mind when she wrote the following passage in her Dialogue: "All the affections and powers unite in perfect souls to produce one harmonious sound, like the chords of a musical instrument. The powers of the soul are the great chords, the senses and sentiments of the body the smaller ones. And when all these are used to the praise of God and in the service of our neighbour, they produce one sound like that of a harmonious organ. All the Saints have touched this organ and drawn forth musical tones. The first who sounded it was a sweet and loving Word, whose Humanity united to His Divinity made sweet music on the wood of the cross. And all His servants have learnt of Him as of their Master to give forth the same music, some in one way and some in another, Divine Providence giving all the instruments on which to play."[2]

Very often she received from God whilst in her ecstasies the understanding of different passages in Holy Scripture, as for example the 99th Psalm (*Jubilate Domino*), which she explained, showing the connection between serving God with joy and coming before Him with confidence; or, again, the history of the young man in the Gospels whom our Lord desired to sell all and follow Him. Her Divine Master gave her to understand that this did

[1] Sup., Part 1, Trat. 2, § 19. [2] Dialogo, cap. 147.

not refer merely to temporal goods, but implied a yet larger sacrifice, even that of the thoughts and affections of the heart, which if they are given to God, so that a man no longer belongs to himself, he will receive the hundredfold in the abundance of grace which will be poured out upon him.[1]

Not once, but as it would seem many times, Catherine received the favour of being mystically washed in the Precious Blood of our redemption. The first time was soon after she had taken the habit of Penance, and often from that time when she beheld the colour of red, it reminded her so powerfully of the Blood of our Lord that she could not refrain from tears.[2] In fact, Catherine's devotion of predilection was undoubtedly that which she bore to the inestimable Price of our Redemption. Hence many of the favours she received had reference to this great gift. In her supernatural sicknesses, which were caused by nothing else than the excess of divine love, she was sometimes bathed in a sweat of blood. Often when in ecstasy she was seen to change colour, appearing now white as snow, now red as fire. Those who beheld her thus were filled with wonder and devotion, and her Confessor on one occasion questioned her as to the cause of these changes in her aspect. She endeavoured to answer him, but the power failing her, she could only weep, and he perceived that the very tears she shed were not of the ordinary kind, but *tinged with blood*.[3]

[1] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 5, § 13. [2] Ibid., Part 2, Trat. 2, § 4.
[3] Ibid., Part 2, Trat. 3, § 16.

CHAPTER V

Her Temptation, Delivery, and Espousals, 1366, 1367

WHEN thou comest to the service of God," says the wise man, "prepare thy soul for temptation. Take all that shall be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience. For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation."[1] These inspired words are for all times and for all souls; and the more exalted the height to which any soul attains, so much the more profoundly must it make experience of their truth. Catherine was not to be exempted from this universal law, but He who designed to perfect her under trial, was pleased to prepare her for it, by inspiring her to pray in a special manner for the gift of fortitude. She persevered in this prayer for many days, at the end of which time our Lord, to recompense her prayer, gave her the following instruction: "Daughter, if thou wilt have the virtue of fortitude, thou must follow Me. True it is that I was able to overcome the power of the enemy in many ways. But, for your example, I chose rather to vanquish him by dying upon the Cross, that you that are only men might learn, if you have a mind to encounter with the enemy, to take the Cross as I did, and so, by the virtue of the same, to overcome all his wiles and strength. And be well assured that this Cross shall be a refreshment to you in your temptations, if you think of the pains that I suffered on it for your sake. If you suffer with Me for My love, you shall also be rewarded with Me. And the more like you are to Me in this life by persecutions and pains, the more like shall you be to Me in

[1] Ecclesias. ii. 1.

the life to come in joy and rest. Therefore, my dear daughter, embrace the Cross; regard for My sake all sweet things as bitter and all bitter things as sweet, and so be certain that you will always be strong. Accept all adversities with a willing and cheerful heart, and dread no power, neither of man nor of the devil. For in whatever manner they shall assault you, by this means you will easily withstand and drive them back."[1]

When our Lord had thus armed and prepared her for the combat, He permitted the evil spirits to assail her with their most cruel temptations. Waking or sleeping she was beset by frightful and humiliating phantoms which sought to defile her eyes and ears, and to torment her in a thousand ways. These attacks Catherine met courageously, chastising her flesh with her iron chain, and prolonging her vigils so as almost to deprive herself of sleep. But her enemies would not retire; they whispered in her ear words of pity and counsel; "Alas, poor little one," they said, "why thus torture thyself in vain? Thinkest thou to be able to endure thus to the end? What gain shall it be to thee to kill thyself by excessive penance? Thou wilt suffer all thy life in this world only to suffer afterwards in hell. Far better to pause ere life be utterly spent, whilst youth is left and the pleasures of the world may yet be tasted and enjoyed." But while these words resounded in the ears of her soul, Catherine admitted them not into her heart, nor did she enter into any argument with the tempter, save only that in reply to his suggestions of despair, she answered humbly, "I trust in my Lord Jesus Christ, and not in myself." Then Satan laying aside his arguments returned to his former method of attack, so that she was pursued everywhere, in her cell, and even in the church, with horrible spectres; and to complete her affliction, her Divine Spouse, who had been wont to visit and console her with His presence, seemed now to forsake her, and thus her soul was plunged in a profound sadness. But not on that account did she interrupt her prayers or her penances. "O miserable creature!" she exclaimed, turning her indignation against herself, and exciting within her heart

[1] Fen., Part 1, cap. 20. Legend, Part 1, cap. 10.

a sentiment of holy self-hatred, "who art thou to look for comfort from God's hands? Thinkest thou that it is *comfort* that thy sins have deserved? It is much for thee that thou art not now in hell, and if thou escape those endless pains, cannot thy Spouse and Creator give thee joy and consolation in an endless eternity? Arise, then, and be of good heart, now is the time to fight manfully: for thee be labours and sufferings, and to His holy Name alone be honour and glory."

One day on her return from the church these terrific assaults were renewed with such violence, that casting herself on her face upon the ground, she remained there for a long space in prayer beseeching God of His mercy to come to her assistance. Then there came to her mind a remembrance of the lesson which she had learned but a short time before, when she had been praying for fortitude; and understanding that all which she now endured proceeded only from the malice of the enemy, she took courage, and resolved from that day to endure all temptations gladly for the love of her Divine Spouse. It was not long before the foul fiends again presented themselves, and sought to drive her to despair, saying, "Miserable wretch, think not to resist us; never will we give thee an hour's peace till thou yield to our will, but during thy whole life we will pain and vex thee continually." But Catherine, full of confidence in God, gave them this heroic answer: "I have chosen pain to be my comfort, and therefore it will not be difficult, but rather pleasant and delightful, for me to endure these and all other afflictions for the love of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and as long as it shall please His Majesty."

Immediately all the company of unclean spirits fled away in confusion, and a marvellous and beautiful light shone from heaven, illuminating her room with its brightness, in the midst of which appeared our Saviour Christ in the same form as He bore when He hung upon the Cross, and there shed His most precious blood for the redemption of the world; who called her unto Him, and said these words: "Mine own daughter, Catherine, seest thou not what I have suffered for thy sake? Think it not much, therefore, to suffer for Me." After that He approached nearer to her

in another form, to comfort her, speaking to her many sweet and loving words. Then she said, using the words of St. Anthony, "O Lord, where wert Thou when my heart was so vexed with foul and horrible temptations?" "Daughter," said He, "I was in thine heart." Then said she again: "O Lord, saving always Thy truth and my dutiful reverence to Thy Divine Majesty, how is it possible that Thou shouldst dwell in a heart filled with so many shameful thoughts?" "Tell Me, daughter," He replied, "did those thoughts cause in thy heart grief or delight?" "Surely," said she, "they caused very great grief and sorrow." "Who, then," said our Lord, "was He that caused that grief and horror in thine heart? Who was it but only I, who abode secretly in the centre of thy soul? Assure thyself of this: if I had not been there present, those foul thoughts that stood round thine heart vainly seeking means to enter had without all doubt prevailed, and made their entry into thy soul with full consent of thy will; but it was My presence that caused in thee that horror, and moved thy heart to resist those temptations as much as it was able; and because it could not do so much as it would, it conceived a great displeasure both against them and also against itself. It was My gracious presence that wrought all these effects in thine heart; wherein I took great delight to see My love, My holy fear, and the zeal of My faith planted in thy soul, My dear daughter and spouse. And so when I saw My time (which was when thou hadst, through My grace and assistance, thoroughly vanquished the pride and insolence of thine enemy), I sent out certain external beams of My light that put these dark fiends to flight. For, by course of nature, darkness may not abide where light is. Last of all, by My light I gave thee to understand that those pains were thy great merit and increase of the virtue of fortitude. And because thou offeredst thyself willingly to suffer for My love, taking such pains with a cheerful heart, and esteeming them as welcome, according as I had taught thee; therefore, My will and pleasure was that they should endure no longer. And so I showed myself, whereupon they vanished quite away. My daughter, I delight not in the pains of My servants, but in their

goodwill and readiness to suffer patiently and gladly for my sake. And because such patience and willingness is shown in pains and adversity, therefore do I suffer them to endure the same. In this time of battle I was in thy heart, fortifying thee with My grace against the enemy, but secretly, to exercise thy patience and increase thy merit. Now, that by My help thou hast manfully fought out thy battle, know that I am, and will be ever, in thy heart more openly, and that I will visit thee yet oftener and more lovingly than before." The vision disappeared, and Catherine was left full of overabundance of joy and sweetness, such as no words may express. And specially she took comfort in dwelling on those words by which our Lord had addressed her, saying, "*Mine own daughter, Catherine.*" And she entreated her confessor to use the same words when he spoke to her, and to call her "My daughter, Catherine," that by hearing them repeated, the sweetness of that happy moment might often be renewed."[1]

From that time our Lord was pleased to bestow on her a greater abundance of favours than she had ever before enjoyed; He visited her, says her biographer, "even as one friend is wont to visit another," sometimes alone and sometimes in company with His Blessed Mother and other Saints. More often, however, He came alone and conversed with her "as a friend with a friend."

It was at this time that Catherine, by the Divine help, acquired the art of reading. She had never learned to read in childhood; but she very early felt a great desire to recite the Office of the Church. She therefore begged one of her sisters to get her an alphabet and teach her the letters, which being done, she spent many weeks in the fruitless endeavour to learn; but at length, finding her efforts of no avail, she resolved to give up the attempt, and rather to seek what she desired from God. One day, therefore, she prostrated upon the ground in prayer, and thus made her petition:—"Lord, if it be agreeable to Thee that I may know how to read, in order that I may recite the Divine Office and sing Thy praises, vouchsafe to teach me what I cannot learn of myself. If not, I am well content to remain in ignorance, or spend my

[1] Fen., Part I, chap. xxi.

time in such simple meditation as it shall please Thee to grant." God heard her prayer, and gave her the faculty she asked for, and that so perfectly that she was able to read any kind of writing as quickly and easily as the most experienced person. She at once procured the necessary books, and began to say her office daily with great devotion. She specially delighted in the versicle with which the hours begin: "*Deus in adjutorium meum intende!*" which she translated and used as an habitual ejaculation. Another of her favourite verses was the following: "*Illumina oculos meos ne unquam obdormiam in morte*," and these words she wrote on a little tablet and hung at the head of her bed.

St. Catherine's recitation of the Divine Office is inseparably connected with the memory of one favour which she received at this time. Very often when her heavenly Spouse deigned to visit her with His sensible presence, He would walk with her in her room and recite the Psalms with her "as though they had been two religious saying their office together." And coming to the *Gloria* at the conclusion of a Psalm, it was her wont to change the words, and instead of "*Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto*," to say, "*Gloria Patri et Tibi et Spiritui Sancto*," thus addressing Him who condescended to bear her company.[1]

As soon as St. Catherine had learnt to read, she began to give considerable time to this occupation. It is evident that she did not merely recite the words of the office, but pondered their sense in her heart. Caffarini remarks in his Supplement, that whenever her first confessor, F. Thomas della Fonte, went to see her, he always found her praying or reading, sometimes bathed in tears, sometimes recreating herself with singing, but never idle. She soon acquired a wonderful knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, especially of the New Testament; and took such a passing delight in speaking and meditating on the life of Jesus Christ as set forth in the Holy Gospels, that if she could find any one to converse with her on that subject she would forget the necessity of food or

[1] The memory of this favour is preserved by an inscription in the chapel *Della Volte*, where it had been often granted to her. It also forms the subject of a painting by Gamberelli, which adorns the same chapel.

sleep. But if in her hours of solitude she knew how to nourish her soul with study and meditation, no less was she sensible of the charms of other pursuits which bear witness to her possession of a graceful and artistic taste. She had a singular love of flowers. "Often, before her appearance in public," says Caffarini, "divine love would cause her to fall into a holy languor, at which time she solaced herself by singing hymns, surrounded by earthly flowers, which reminded her of those of her heavenly Spouse. She twined them into garlands, or arranged them with admirable skill into the form of crosses; and these she afterwards distributed in order to excite other souls to the love of God." The same is testified by other witnesses, who speak of her great love for roses, lilies, and violets, and tell us how after she had finished her accustomed penances, she would arrange them into exquisite bouquets, singing over her work.[1]

But the time was fast approaching, when this life of silence and retirement was to be exchanged for one of active labour; not indeed, all at once, but gradually and, as it would seem, in obedience to *two distinct notifications* of *the divine will*, each preceded by a special increase of heavenly grace, and accompanied by mysterious, sensible signs, as their outward pledge and assurance. It was a change which, on the part of Catherine, entailed a costly sacrifice. God, Who would prepare her for it, and Who designed to make her the pliant instrument of His all holy purposes, inspired her at this time to seek, by means of earnest and continual prayer, no less a gift than the *perfection of faith*, so that henceforth nothing might separate her from Him. In answer to this prayer, in which she persevered for a long time, He caused her to hear in her heart these words, "I will espouse thee to Me in faith." And still, as she renewed her request with ever-increasing earnestness, the same answer was repeated, and in the same words. At length

[1] F. Raymund says in the Legend (Part 2, chap. xi.), that "God was pleased to work many miracles by His spouse on inanimate things, and specially on flowers, in which the holy virgin greatly delighted." Of these miracles, however, he gives no examples. In consequence of Catherine's singular love of flowers the custom arose of celebrating her feast (even before her canonisation) by extraordinary floral decorations.

as Lent drew near, on the last days of the Carnival, when, according to custom, the city was given up to the riotous festivities usual at that season, Catherine shut herself up in her cell, and sought by prayer and fasting to make reparation for the offences committed by the thoughtless crowds who passed her door. And she besought our Lord that He would vouchsafe at this time to perform His promise, and bestow on her that perfection of faith she had so long desired. Then He appeared to her, and answered her in these words: "Because thou hast forsaken all the vanities of the world, and set thy love upon Me, and because thou hast, for My sake, rather chosen to afflict thy body with fasting than to eat flesh with others, especially at this time, when all others that dwell round about thee, yea, and those also that dwell in the same house with thee, are banqueting and making good cheer, therefore I am determined, this day, to keep a solemn feast with thee, and with great joy and pomp to espouse thy soul to Me in faith." As He was yet speaking, there appeared in the same place the most glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of God, the beloved disciple St. John the Evangelist, St. Paul the Apostle, and the great patriarch and founder of her order, St. Dominic; and after these came the kingly prophet and poet David, with a musical psalter in his hand, on which he played a heavenly song of inestimable sweetness. Then our Blessed Lady came to her and took her by the hand, which she held towards her Divine Son, and besought Him that He would vouchsafe to espouse her to Him in faith. To which He consented with a very sweet and lovely countenance, and taking out a ring that was set about with four precious pearls and had in the other part a marvellous rich diamond, He put the same on the finger of her right hand, saying thus: "Behold, I here espouse thee to Me, thy Maker and Saviour, in faith, which shall continue in thee from this time forward, evermore unchanged, until the time shall come of a blissful consummation in the joys of heaven. Now then, act courageously: thou art armed with faith, and shalt triumph over all thine enemies."[1] The vision disappeared, but the ring,

[1] Fen., Part 1, ch. xxiii. Caffarini in the *Leggenda Minore* specifies the

invisible indeed to other eyes than Catherine's, remained upon her finger; mysterious token of a favour no less mysterious, yet one the signification of which is not obscure to the student of Holy Scripture. If every faithful soul is knit to its Creator by the tie of a spiritual espousal,[1] what must not have been the closeness of that union which Catherine contracted when she received as her dowry "the perfection of faith"? That precious ring was to her the token of her Divine Vocation; the pledge of an indissoluble union with her Beloved. "She was destined," says Raymund, "to save innumerable souls from the stormy ocean of this world, without dreading for herself shipwreck or tempest." God therefore prepared her as a fit instrument for the Divine work He was about to entrust to her, and when the instrument was perfected, the word was spoken which called her to a new manner of life.

last day of the Carnival as that on which this favour was granted. This, in Siena, was the *Tuesday* before Quinquagesima. Following the more general custom, however, the movable feast, formerly kept as the Espousals of St. Catherine (now merged in that of her Translation), is kept on the Thursday before Quinquagesima Sunday. In 1705 the High Consistory of Siena published a decree to be observed for ever in the Contrada di Fontebranda, forbidding masks, dances, and other Carnival festivities to be held "on the last day of the Carnival, dedicated to the sacred Espousals of their Seraphic fellow-citizen, Catherine Benincasa." It is somewhat remarkable that Catherine appears from this time to have worn a real material ring. One such is preserved at Città di Castello, said to have been hers.

[1] "I have espoused you as a chaste virgin to Jesus Christ."—2 Cor. xi. 2.

CHAPTER VI

Catherine in Her Family, 1367

THE cell in which Catherine had now spent three years hidden from the world had become to her the gate of heaven, and had she followed her own attraction she would never more have quitted it. But God had other designs over her, and after the celebration of her mystic Espousals, He began little by little to call on her to return once more to her place in the family, and to hold converse with men. Not that He withdrew from her any of His former favours, or ceased those heavenly visitations which she had hitherto enjoyed; but from time to time He would make known to her His will, saying, "Behold the hour of dinner is at hand, go up[1] therefore and take thy place at table with thy family, and then return to Me." When first this intimation of the Divine will was given to her, Catherine was overwhelmed with sorrow, and entreated with many tears that she might not be required to forego her solitude, or to return to such intercourse with the world as would separate her from the blessed presence of her Spouse. "O my good Lord!" she said, "wherefore wilt Thou have me to go and eat with them? Doth man live by bread only, and not by every word that cometh from Thy mouth? Hast Thou not caused me to forsake the conversation of men that I might the better converse with Thee; and now that I have found Thee must I again lose so precious a treasure, and return to the world which shall dim the purity and clearness of my

[1] In the Legend it stands, "Go quickly;" in the English version, "Go down;" Caffarini in the *Leggenda Minore* has it, more correctly, "Go *up*," *i.e.*, from her cell *under* her father's house.

faith?" But in reply our Lord opened to her gaze the sublime path in treading which she was "to fulfil all justice." Souls that would do this must be profitable not only to themselves but also to others. Nor need they on that account be separated from God, but rather united to Him more firmly. For the perfection which he requires of them is the love of God and of their neighbour, in which twofold love stand all the law and the prophets. That zeal which made itself felt in the heart of Catherine whilst yet a child, and which had first moved her to enrol herself as a daughter of St. Dominic, was now to find its proper scope, and wearing the habit of an apostolic Order she was to be called to the apostolic life. In vain did she in her humility and simplicity represent her unworthiness for such a function, whether by the weakness of her sex or other infirmities. "How can I, a poor and miserable woman, be able to do any good in Thy Church?" she would say; "how shall I instruct wise and learned men, or how will it be even seemly for me to live and converse with them?" But He made her to understand that in the counsels of His wisdom He had chosen her, a weak woman, to confound the pride of the strong. Her mission was to exhibit to a world "lying in wickedness" the power of the Divine Word, made known to them by the feeblest of human instruments. "Daughter," He said, "I will impart to thee My secret in this matter. Know thou that nowadays pride so abounds in the world, and specially among those who hold themselves for wise and learned, that My justice may no longer bear it. Now the proper punishment as well as the sovereign medicine for pride is to be confounded and put to shame. Therefore I have determined that those men who are wise in their own conceits should be made ashamed by seeing weak and frail women, whom they account as things vile and abject, to understand the mysteries of God, not by human study, but only by infused grace; confirming such doctrine by many marvellous signs above the course of nature. I will do now as I did when I was conversing in this world, and sent simple and unlearned men, and poor fishermen replenished with the strength of My Spirit, to confound the wisdom of the world. So will I now,

in like manner, send thee and other ignorant persons, both men and women, to humble the pride of those who are wise in their own eyes. If they will embrace My doctrine spread throughout the world by such weak vessels, I will regard them with mercy, but if they refuse to do so they shall be brought to shame. Wherefore, daughter, set thyself in readiness to go forth into the world; for I will be with thee at all times, and in all places, and will direct thee in all things that I shall send thee to do."

When once the will of her Divine Spouse had thus been manifested, Catherine had no thought save to bow her head and to obey. Yet she owned to her confessor that each time our Lord ordered her to quit her cell and mix with the world outside, it cost her so lively a sorrow, that it seemed to her as if her heart must break. From that time her love and desire for Holy Communion greatly increased, because by the more frequent reception of the Body of her Divine Spouse, she trusted to persevere, and as it were to rivet the closeness of those bonds which she feared a renewed intercourse with the world might sever. It is quite certain that Catherine did not interpret the command she had received as requiring her at once to undertake extraordinary work for souls of her own choosing. On the contrary, she waited until it should be made manifest what our Lord demanded of her, and the rule she had made for herself was still enforced, according to which she spoke to no man beyond the limits of her family without the permission of her confessor. As regarded the injunction to mix with the household, however, she set herself to accomplish it with all possible fervour, and made her return to the family circle the occasion for taking on herself fresh practices of penance and humility. She chose to perform every menial office in the house, such as sweeping, washing the dishes, and serving in the kitchen. Not content with this she would rise at night when the others were asleep, and wash all the dirty clothes which she found; and when the servant fell sick, she not only supplied her place, but nursed and attended to her wants during her sickness. Yet none of these exterior actions disturbed the interior recollection of her soul, or withdrew her in the least

degree from the Divine presence, and her ecstasies became even more frequent.

Such was her manner of life when, in 1366, Father Thomas Antonio Caffarini first made her acquaintance. He belonged to the convent of St. Dominic, and was still very young when he was admitted into the family on terms of intimate friendship. His recollections of Catherine in those early days are touching from their very simplicity. He often sat with her at her father's table, and saw that she ate next to nothing, but during the meal she would talk to them of God, and was always to be seen with a gay and smiling countenance.[1] Wonderfully circumspect in her words, never idle or in any way reprehensible, never disturbed save when God was offended, she was always affable, kind, and full of joy, specially in time of sickness or affliction. The robust frame which she possessed as a young girl was fast wasting under the fire of Divine love, joined to her continual austerities. Eating was a daily torture to her, for her digestion had become so weak that she was incapable of retaining any solid food. Nevertheless, to please and satisfy her parents, she would force herself to swallow something, and would call the summons to the family meal "going to execution," so terrible was the suffering it cost her. "Nevertheless," he continues, "I always saw her cheerful. I remember once, when she was covered with wounds, she called them her flowers, saying, 'These are my flowers and roses.' Only in time of worldly prosperity was she ever sad, for she would say, 'I desire not such gifts for my family, but rather the eternal joys of heaven.'" She often bestowed on him some of the nosegays she was in the habit of making and distributing to her friends; and her confessor, F. Thomas della Fonte, more than once gave him some bread which she had made with her own hands. "Nor did I think it a little thing to have eaten it," he observes. "And whatever she did, whether she made the bread or busied herself in any other household work, she was always on fire with the love

[1] The same was observed by all those who were familiar with her. It is one of the features which Anastagio di Monte Altino introduces in his poetical portraiture of her: "*Ella è sempremai lieta e ridente.*"

of God." The same Father Thomas della Fonte showed him one of her disciplines, composed of cords with iron points, "which looked as if it had been steeped for a long time in a vessel of blood, and then dried." He was an eye-witness of her vigils and her ecstasies; and on one occasion, when she was rapt in God, he listened to the burning words which fell from her lips, and was conscious of an exquisite perfume which seemed to escape from her, and which caused him for many days afterwards a sense of unspeakable consolation. The same fact was testified by other witnesses, who affirmed that this heavenly fragrance was perceptible on merely approaching her cell, and had been the means of inspiring many with sentiments of profound compunction.

The home-circle, in which Catherine now resumed her place, deserves a few words of notice. Giacomo was still living, a prosperous tradesman, beholding with honest pride the numerous children and grandchildren who gathered round his hearth and assisted him in his business. From the street that rises above the Fullonica we can still look down on the meadows where he and his workmen were accustomed to wash their wool and lay it out for bleaching. Within the house all things were well regulated by Lapa, the most industrious of housewives, unchanged in all respects from the old Lapa with whom we have already made acquaintance, and who was ever oscillating between an indulgent tenderness towards her favourite daughter and the despair excited by her practices of charity or penance. Of the brothers we know but little; besides those whose names have been already given, there was one, a wild and heedless youth, who, growing weary of trade, resolved to try his fortune as a soldier, and, to the sorrow of his parents, set out for the wars. In the first encounter he was severely wounded, and left for dead on the field of battle. At the moment when he fell Catherine was supernaturally warned of what had happened, and shed bitter tears, fearing lest her brother's soul might be in no less grievous danger than his body. With characteristic prudence, however, she said nothing of the matter to her mother, but had recourse

to prayer. The wounded youth found means of returning home, where the tender care of his mother and sister restored him to health; and becoming a wiser man by his experience, he made no further trial of the military career. Perhaps it was this same brother of whom we read that, having cause to be uneasy regarding the state of his soul, Catherine, being one day in the church, set herself to pray for his conversion, and addressing our Lord with her accustomed confidence, she said, "O Lord, I will not rise from my knees until Thou grant me this favour." Then, feeling in her heart a certain assurance that her prayer had been heard, she returned home, and found her brother in his room, weeping over his sins. She sweetly consoled him, and found no difficulty in inducing him at once to go to confession. But there was one member of the family who was bound to Catherine by even closer ties than those of blood. It was her sister-in-law Lisa, the confidante of her childhood, the friend and companion of her maturer years. Her numerous children were the objects of Catherine's tenderest affection: she had a singular love for children, and had she followed her inclination, would have had them always with her. "Were it becoming," she would say, "I should never weary of caressing them."[1] The greater number of these little ones were taken away in early youth, for Lisa was destined to be drawn closer to God by the stroke of domestic affliction. Two of her daughters, however, lived to take the religious habit in the convent of St. Agnes of Montepulciano, and a letter is preserved addressed by St. Catherine to one of them named Eugenia. The strong mutual affection existing between Catherine and Lisa is apparent from many passages both in the Legend and in the letters of the Saint. In one of the last she addresses her friend as *Mia cognata secondo la carne, mia sorella secondo Cristo.*" In fact, after the death of her husband, Lisa put

[1] Sup., Part 1, Trat. 2, § 12. Lisa was often in danger of death when giving birth to her children, and on two occasions both mother and child owed their safety to the prayers of the Saint. This seems to have been the origin of the very special love she bore to these little ones—the children of her prayers.

on the habit of Penance, and became Catherine's inseparable companion even until her death. Their close intimacy gave her opportunities of becoming acquainted with many circumstances of Catherine's life, which were unknown to others, and from her F. Raymund collected some of the most interesting facts which he has introduced into the Legend. She had personal experience within their own family of that wonderful knowledge of hearts which God had communicated to the holy virgin—a supernatural gift which often brought anguish to its possessor. It was not easy to escape the glance of her gentle but penetrating eye. One day, having opened her breviary to say Vespers, Catherine was rapt in ecstasy, and remained in that state for four hours. Coming to herself, she was conscious of an insupportable odour which often indicated to her the presence of a soul stained by mortal sin. At the same moment it was made known to her that one of her brothers had grievously offended God. Pierced with sorrow, she interceded for the unfortunate youth; then, hearing his footstep at the door, she rose to meet him. As he listened to her words of sad reproof, he stood abashed and conscience-stricken, and found, to his surprise, that before those grave and weeping eyes the secrets of his heart lay open.[1] Another of these domestic incidents was of a less sorrowful character. Lisa had determined on making a general confession, but, wishing to keep the matter private, she said nothing to any of the family, and chose the remote corner of an unfrequented church, where, having made her confession to one who was not her ordinary confessor, she returned home, as she imagined, unperceived. But Catherine met her, and embracing her with tenderness, exclaimed a little archly, "Oh! now you are really my good little sister!" Lisa inquired the meaning of her unusual salutation, and was somewhat disconcerted on finding that her whole proceedings were perfectly known. Seeing her confusion, Catherine sweetly consoled her, saying, "I shall always love you the better, my Lisa for this morning's work."[2]

Mention has been made of F. Thomas Caffarini as at this time

[1] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 5, § 7

[2] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 5, § 8.

a frequent visitor at the Fullonica; and a little later another of the Friars was introduced to Catherine by his old friend and fellow novice, F. Thomas della Fonte. This was F. Bartholomew Dominic, who seems first to have made her acquaintance early n 1368, and who for the remaining twelve years of her life continued to enjoy her most intimate friendship. When first he was admitted into the little chamber to which she retired when her presence with the rest of the family was no longer required, it bore the same aspect of austerity and recollection which has been already described. The door and window[1] were always kept closed, and a lamp burnt day and night before the crucifix and the image of the Blessed Virgin and other Saints. There was the bed of boards, which in the day-time she used as a bench on which to sit; there were the brick steps, which may still be seen, and which often served as her only pillow; and, above all, there was the wasted form of one whose very beauty was so unlike the beauty of earth that it told its own tale of a nature purified and sublimated by penance. "When first I began to visit her," he says, "she was young, and her countenance was always serene and joyful. I was also young; yet, far from experiencing in her presence the embarrassment which I might have felt in the company of other women of her age, the longer I conversed with her, the more utterly were all earthly passions extinguished in my breast. I have known many—both laymen and religious—who experienced the same thing; there was a something in her whole appearance so redolent of purity as to be far more angelic than human."[2]

Besides these friends and the members of her own immediate family, Catherine admitted into her privacy some of the other Mantellate, and with them Bartholomew often found her, after the labours of the day were over, singing hymns and making garlands. Then she would converse with them on the things of God, but would break off, saying with a sigh, "It were better to

[1] Out of this window, according to local tradition, Catherine was wont to distribute alms to the poor.

[2] Process, 1314.

be silent than to speak of such things in such a way. It is like dipping pearls in mud to attempt to relate them with a tongue of flesh." "As to my repetition of her words," he adds, "it is as insipid as a dish of meat without salt." Gradually others of the Friars came to visit her, and listened with wonder to her words. "How often," says Caffarini, "have I heard her exhort them to be true sons of their Holy Father, to abide in the cell of self-knowledge, to feed on souls, and to weep over sinners! Sometimes she would exclaim, 'Let us live in our cell!' or again, 'Let us weep, let us weep over all these dead souls!' And I know by experience that by her prayers and exhortations, and her own holy example, devotion and penance revived in our convent at Siena; the use of fasts, disciplines, and haircloths increased among us, and primitive observance began to be restored."

The unbroken union with God which Catherine enjoyed, and which was never interrupted by her active employments, often caused her to be rapt in ecstasy even when engaged in the homeliest household duties. It could not be otherwise, says Raymund, "for her heart ever tended heavenward, and drew the body with it. At such times her limbs became stiff, her eyes closed, and her body, raised in the air, often diffused a perfume of exquisite sweetness." He declares in the Legend that she had been thus seen by him and his brethren a thousand times, and her other disciples all speak to the same effect. In consequence, she was exposed to exactly the same kind of annoyance, on the part whether of the curious or the devout, which in all times falls to the lot of an Ecstatica. People were always trying to see her, asking her confessor to admit them to her chamber when the Saint was in ecstasy, or plotting with her companions to bring her to some place on a mission of charity, where they might have a chance of beholding the prodigy. And the embarrassment was the greater from the impossibility she was under of restraining that suspension of her bodily faculties which the very thought of God would suffice to occasion. If this took place in the presence of others it caused her the utmost confusion. "You see, father," she would say, addressing her confessor, "I am not fit to converse with others;

I entreat you, let me go elsewhere."[1] But if he refused her the permission to do so, she never disobeyed, but, bowing her head, submitted meekly to the hard command.[2] One instance of these unwelcome visits of pious intruders may suffice as a sample. Fra Niccolo of Cascina had come to Siena from Pisa, as he said, upon business; but, says Caffarini, more probably out of nothing else than his desire to behold the Ecstatica, of whom he had heard through his brethren, for he too was a Friar Preacher. Persuading F. Thomas to take him to her father's house, they entered her chamber, and found her in abstraction, unable to hear or speak with them. "She appeared like a statue which retains nothing but the human form."[3] Suddenly they beheld her raised gently into the air, and sustained there as by some invisible hand; after which there began to fall from her lips the following broken exclamations: "O inestimable Charity! O eternal Truth! when shall I have the happiness of suffering something for Thy glory? Yet if in this desire Thou seest aught of vanity or self-love, I conjure Thee annihilate it, destroy it, tear it out of my heart!" Fra Niccolo listened with awe and tender devotion, and with humble reverence extending his hand, he touched her lightly with one of his fingers. And that slight touch communicated to his hand so wondrous a fragrance, that for the entire day it seemed to infuse a strength and consolation as well to his corporal as to his spiritual senses.[4]

It very often happened that persons, out of mere curiosity, would obtain permission from F. Thomas to secrete themselves somewhere in order to behold Catherine in this state of abstraction. But again and again it happened that when such persons beheld her absorbed in prayer, the mere spectacle so moved them to compunction as to effect an entire change of heart. Then, after they were gone away, the Saint, returning to herself, would say to her confessor, "Who were those persons you brought here just now?" "And how do you know I had any person with

[1] Sup., Part 1, Trat. 2, § 14. [2] *Ibid.*, Part 2, Trat. 3, § 4.
[3] "*Quasi statua che ritenesse la sola figura di donna.*"
[4] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 3, § 3.

me?" he would reply. Then, with an air of gravity, she would say, "Father, such and such persons were here, and they came in your company, being curious to see me thus;" and he soon found that it was impossible to deceive her.

These prodigies were not equally well understood by all who witnessed them, and it sometimes happened that Lapa, who had no great experience in the phenomena of ecstasies,[1] would find her daughter in this condition, and try to bend her rigid limbs, not always in the gentlest manner. On one of these occasions she used so much force as nearly to break her daughter's neck, and Catherine, on returning to herself, suffered great pain in consequence. Another day, being engaged in the kitchen according to her custom, she sat down by the fire and began to turn the spit; as she did so she was rapt in ecstasy, and became wholly insensible to exterior things. Her sister-in-law, Lisa, observing this, and being better acquainted than Lapa with the nature of these heavenly raptures, quietly took her place at the spit, leaving her to enjoy undisturbed the Divine communications. When the meat was roasted, supper was served to the family, Lisa still discharging all those services which were generally rendered by her sister; and when supper was ended, having attended to the wants of her husband and put her children to bed, she returned to Catherine, intending to watch by her till she should recover consciousness. On re-entering the kitchen, however, she was terrified to find that Catherine had fallen forwards, and was lying with her body on the burning coals. The fire was large and fierce, for an unusual quantity of wood was always kept burning in the house for the sake of preparing the dyes. "Alas!" cried Lisa, "Catherine is all burnt;" and so saying, she ran and drew her out of the smoking embers, but found, to her wonder, that she had received no injury either in her person or even her clothes, on which the "smell of fire had not passed." "And yet," says her old English biographer, "it was a great fire, and she a long time in it. But the fire of God's love that burnt within her heart was of such force and virtue that it would not suffer that

[1] "*Non consapevole di quest' estasi*," says Raymund.

outward fire to prevail over her." This was not the only occasion when fire seemed to have no power of injuring her. One day, when praying in the Church of San Domenico, and leaning, according to her custom, against the pilaster that supports the roof of the chapel *Delle Volte*, it chanced that, some candles having been set up before the image of some saint that stood in that place, one of them fell upon her head, she being at the time in ecstasy, and continued burning there, without, however, doing her any kind of harm, or so much as singeing her veil.

Other anecdotes which seem to belong to this time are of a less homely character. Her companions tried sometimes to induce her to accompany them on little expeditions, whether of charity or otherwise, beyond the city gates. One of the places which they visited was the Monastery of St. Abondio, the favourite resort of St. John Columbini, who was buried there, and whose only daughter was a nun within its walls. Possibly this circumstance may explain their visit, as Lisa, who, no doubt, accompanied her sister-in-law, was the saint's near relative. Catherine, when they set out, was suffering from an affection of the chest, which made any exertion painful to her; nevertheless, with her usual sweet charity, she complied with the wishes of her Sisters, and set out in their company. She had not gone far when, overwhelmed, as it seemed, by some glorious vision, she exchanged her feeble steps for a pace so rapid that none of her companions could keep up with her. They followed as best they might, and beheld her carried forward with wonderful impetuosity, her eyes being all the while closed. Reaching the convent, she at once entered the church, and prostrated before the altar. When the others came in they found her in ecstasy, and in that state she began to utter such sweet and wonderful things that they were stupefied with astonishment; and the rumour of what was passing spreading through the house, the community gathered in the upper choir and other parts overlooking the church, whence they could behold and listen to her.

Another time they took her to a neighbouring village, and, as

usual, she became so absorbed in meditation, that, though indeed she walked with the others, her senses were quite abstracted, nor could they rouse her by pushing or shaking her. At last, however, they were surprised to hear her begin to sing, and were very soon sensible of a new kind of marvel; for, as they listened to her sweet voice, they were themselves made sharers in the holy jubilee which filled her breast, and felt as though transformed into different persons. They returned to the city singing the Divine praises, and heedless of the rain which fell in torrents; and such was the supernatural grace infused into them, that for three entire days they remained recreated by it, nor so much as thought of taking their ordinary food.

CHAPTER VII

Catherine's Charity to her Neighbour, 1367, 1368

CATHERINE had not been drawn from the privacy of her little chamber merely to take part in household duties, or even to diffuse among her family and those who from time to time visited her in her home the good odour of her virtues. In abandoning her solitude she had feared at first to lose that continual presence of her Beloved which was dearer to her than life itself. But He is pleased to abide in other sanctuaries than the solitary cell, and Catherine learnt to seek Him and find Him in His two chosen dwelling-places—the Sacrament of His love and the person of His poor. And indeed it would have been impossible for a love like hers to have rested content with devout affections without seeking for relief in action. It is her own maxim that "the love we conceive towards God we must bring forth in acts of charity towards our neighbour. God himself is beyond our reach; therefore the services we cannot render directly to him, He wills we should render to our neighbour."[1] In conformity with this principle, she very soon began to exercise herself in charitable labours for the sick and needy; but having nothing of her own to bestow, and considering herself bound by her religious character to the practice of poverty, she besought her father to allow her to deduct the share of the poor from the abundance of temporal things which were enjoyed by the family. Giacomo willingly consented: his reverence for his daughter had increased with years, and he made known to the whole house-

[1] Dialogo, ch. vii.

hold the permission he had granted her. "Let no one hinder my dear daughter from giving alms," he said; "if she give all there is in the house, I am well content." Catherine carried out his permission almost to the letter; but her liberality, however large, was always discreet. She sought out certain poor families whom she knew to be in great distress, yet ashamed to beg, and gave them relief as secret as it was timely. For, rising very early in the morning, she would load herself with corn, wine, oil, and other necessaries, and stealing to their houses, she would gently place her store of provisions within the door, and return home without being perceived. One day, when she was lying sick in bed, suffering great pain in every part of her body, she learnt that a poor widow of the neighbourhood was in a state of great distress, not having even a loaf of bread to give to her children. Catherine spent the night in praying to our Lord that He would give her strength enough to go and help the poor woman; and rising before it was day, she procured a large sack, and went about the house gathering together meal, wine, oil, and any other food that she could find. When she had carried all these things to her cell, she began to fear lest it would be impossible for her to carry such a burthen. Nevertheless, lifting up her heart to God, she made the attempt; and as soon as the morning bell had rung (before which no person was suffered to leave their house), she went forth into the street, feeling her load "no more than if it had been a wisp of straw." By the providence of God she found the widow's door half open, and thrusting in her sack of provisions, she would have hurried away, when her strength forsook her, and she was nearly sinking to the ground. But, turning to her Spouse, between game and earnest, she began to say, "O Lord, why hast Thou deceived me? Is it Thy pleasure that all the neighbours should see my folly and laugh me to scorn? Behold, the day is coming on, and I shall be discovered by all men. Give me so much strength that I may be able to return home to my chamber, and then lay on me as much weakness as Thou pleasest." Then our Lord heard her, and, pitying her case, gave her strength enough to make her way home again, where, as soon as she had arrived,

the grievous sickness from which she had been suffering returned upon her as before.

Two other incidents must be related in the beautiful language of the old Legend:—

"While Catherine was one day in St. Dominic's church, there came to her a poor man, who besought her, for God's love, that she would give him somewhat; to whom, because she had nothing there to give (for it was not her manner to carry either gold or silver about her), she spake very gently, and prayed him that he would have so much patience as to wait there till she might go home and come again. The poor man made answer that he could not tarry so long, but if she had anything there to give, she should give it, for otherwise he must needs go his way. She was loth that he should go away from her without something, and therefore bethought herself carefully what thing she might have about her to serve that poor man's need; and it came to her mind that she had a little cross of silver that hung by her beads, which she broke off with all speed, and gave gladly to the poor man, who likewise, when he had received this alms at her hand, went his way, and was seen no more to beg that day, as though his coming had been for that cross only. The night following, as she was occupied in prayer, after her accustomed manner, our Saviour Christ appeared unto her, having that same cross in His hand, set with divers and sundry precious stones, and said unto her, 'Daughter, knowest thou this cross?' 'Yes, Lord,' said she, 'I know it right well; but it was not so richly decked when I had it.' Then said our Lord to her again, 'Yesterday thou gavest Me this cross with a cheerful heart and great charity, which love and charity are signified by these precious stones. And, therefore, I promise thee that at the day of judgment I will show the same, in the presence of men and angels, to the increase of thine everlasting joy and glory; for I will not suffer to be hidden such deeds of charity as are done by thee.' With that, this apparition ceased, and left her replenished with unspeakable joy and gladness. And from that time forward her desire of relieving the poor greatly increased."

One day, when the office was finished in the church of the

Friars, she remained behind alone with one of her sisters to pray; and as she was coming down from the chapel belonging to the Sisters of Penance, our Lord appeared to her in the likeness of a poor pilgrim, of the age, as it seemed, of three and thirty years, half naked, and besought her that she would give him clothes for the love of God. "Tarry here a little while," said she, "until I go to yonder chapel and come again; and then, God willing, I will help thee with clothes." With that she went up again to the chapel, and undid her kirtle, under which she wore a sleeveless petticoat, which she took off, and came down again and gave it to the poor man very sweetly. When the poor man had received the coat, he besought her furthermore that, seeing she had given him a woollen garment to wear outwardly, she would also be so good as to give him some shirt of linen to wear next his body. "Willingly," said she; "come home with me, and I will seek out one for thee." And so she went on before, and the poor man came after. When she was come home she went to the chests and presses where the linen clothes of her father and brothers were laid up, and took out a shirt and certain other linen clothes, and gave the same gladly to the poor man. When the poor pilgrim had received all these things at her hand, he did not depart, but prayed her yet more that she would give him sleeves to his coat to cover his arms. "With a goodwill," said she; "for otherwise, I grant, this coat were to no great purpose." And with that she went and sought all about for sleeves, and at last found a new coat of a maid-servant that was in the house, which had never been worn, and took off the sleeves from the same and gave them cheerfully to the poor pilgrim, who received those sleeves also thankfully at her hand, as he had done all the rest, and said unto her, "Mistress, ye have now clothed me thoroughly: He for whose love ye have done it thanks you for it: but yet one demand more I have to make unto you. I have a companion lying in an hospital here by, who standeth in great need of clothes; if it shall please you to send him any, I will carry them unto him in your behalf with a very goodwill." This new request troubled her somewhat, and caused her to have a

certain conflict within herself. On the one side, she was much moved with compassion for that poor man, and had a great desire to supply his necessity. On the other side, she considered the murmuring and grudging of as many as were in the house, who waxed so weary of her dealing out their things, that, to keep them from her hands, they began, every one, to keep their apparel and other goods under lock and key. Again, she thought she had done enough to take away the sleeves of the servant's new coat that was never worn, and that she could not with discretion take any more from her, being herself also needy and poor. Then she began to reason with herself whether she might conveniently part from her own garment or no. She was much inclined to do it, because she knew it was a great work of charity, and saw also that she was better able to bear that lack of clothes than the poor man was. But, on the other hand, she considered that if she should spoil herself of her clothes, she should in so doing transgress the rules of prudence, which might cause great offence in the minds of men. All which things thus considered and discreetly weighed, she resolved in herself that in this case it was far better to abstain from giving her alms than, by giving the same, to cause offence to her neighbour. She spake, therefore, to the poor man after a very gentle and sweet manner, and said, "Truly, good man, if I might do it with modesty, I would spoil myself even of this coat that I wear, with all my heart, and bestow it upon thy companion; but because I have no more garments to put on but only this, I must needs pray thee to hold me excused, for in truth there lacketh no goodwill in me, but only ability." With that the poor man smiled upon her, and said, "Mistress, I see right well that if ye had ought to give, you would gladly give it. I thank you for your goodwill: God reward and keep you!" And so he took his leave of her, and went his way in such sort that she gathered, by certain signs, that this poor pilgrim was indeed He that was wont to appear unto her. But such was her lowliness and base esteem of herself, that she thought herself unworthy to receive such honour at God's hand; and therefore, with an humble mind, she returned to her wonted services in the

house, where, notwithstanding, she kept her heart evermore fixed upon her dear Spouse, Jesus Christ, who the next night following appeared unto her again (as she was praying) in the likeness of the poor man, holding in His hand[1] that coat which she had given Him, all set and decked with goodly pearls and precious stones that shone all over the chamber, and said unto her, "Dear daughter, knowest thou this coat?" "Yes, Lord," said she, "I know it very well; but it was not so richly decked when it was with me." Then said our Lord to her again, "Yesterday thou gavest Me this coat very freely and charitably to cover the nakedness of My body, and to keep it from cold and shame. This day, for recompense of thy great charity towards Me, I give thee a coat that shall be invisible to other men, but to thee alone visible and also sensible, by virtue whereof thou shalt be defended both in body and soul from all hurtful cold; and with this garment thou shalt be clad until the time come that in the presence of angels and saints I shall put on upon thee the blissful and glorious garment of immortality." When He had said these words, He drew out of the wound of His side a robe of sanguine colour, shining all about and yielding a marvellous, beautiful light; and putting the same upon her with His own hands, said "This garment I give thee for all the time that thou shalt live here upon the earth, in token and pledge of that immortal garment that thou shalt receive at My hands in heaven." And with these words that vision ceased, and left her endowed with such a strange grace and quality, not only in soul, but also in body, that from that very instant she never felt alteration in her body, but continued evermore in one temperature, whether it were winter or summer, hot or cold, wind or rain; and whatsoever weather came, she never wore more clothes under her habit than one single garment."[2]

[1] In the *Leggenda Minore* we read that our Lord appeared *wearing* her garment, and the following marginal note is written on the original MS. preserved at Siena: "*Questo atto è dipinto a Roma assai adornatamente.*" Thus showing that St. Catherine was venerated as a Saint almost immediately after her death.

[2] Fen., Part 2, chaps. vi., vii.

Sometimes these acts of charity were accompanied by other miraculous tokens, as when, hastening to the relief of a poor man who was dying of hunger, she took a bag of eggs under her mantle. But on her way, stepping into a church, the door of which was open, and intending only to make a passing visit, she was seized with an ecstasy, and fell down on the eggs so heavily as to crush a metal thimble which happened to be in the bag, the eggs themselves suffering no injury. One more story was attested by more than twenty persons, witnesses of the fact. At the time when she had her father's leave to give out to the poor whatever she chose, it happened that the vessel of wine which was being used by the family had run low, and what remained in it seemed to her not good enough to give to the poor; for it was her custom in giving alms always to give the best, for God's sake. She went therefore to the next vessel which had not been touched, and drew out of it largely, without its coming to the knowledge of any of the household. When the first butt had been quite exhausted, the person who had charge of the wine-cellar came to this vessel and began to draw out of it for the use of the family, whilst Catherine likewise continued to draw from it as before. According to the size of the butt, it would have sufficed the household for fifteen or twenty days, but instead of this a whole month passed, and the wine decreased neither in quantity nor quality. Everybody wondered that the vessel should hold out so long, and declared that in their lifetime they had never tasted better wine; but Catherine felt no wonder about it, understanding that it was the work of God, whose wont it is to bless and multiply the substance of those who are ready to help the poor, for His love. One month had expired and another was begun, and still the wine continued as fresh and abundant as ever. At last, when the time came when the grapes were ripe and ready for the press, all the wine-butts being required to receive the new wine, he who had the charge of the vintage desired that this vessel should be emptied of its contents, that it might be filled afresh. They imagined little or nothing could be left in it, but to their surprise found that the tap ran as copiously as ever. At last they resolved

to gauge the vessel and see what was in it, when lo! they found it perfectly dry, as if it had stood without liquor for many months, which caused them no less wonder than they had felt before at the abundance and excellence of the wine.

F. Bartholomew in his deposition relates either the same story with different circumstances, or, which is very possible, an entirely different incident. He says that Giacomo had forbidden a certain vessel of wine to be used for the family, on account of its being of superior quality. Catherine, hearing this, considered that the better the quality the fitter it was to be dispensed to the poor, and drew from it till it was empty. One day, he continues, her father desired the maid to go and draw wine out of that cask; but she returned, saying there was nothing in it. Every one was dismayed, and some began to reproach the servant, as though it were she who had secretly taken it, whilst Giacomo angrily insisted on knowing who had disobeyed his orders. Catherine was in her own chamber, but hearing the tumult, and guessing the cause, she went to the assembled family, and said sweetly, "Dear father, why are you troubled? Be not disturbed; I will go and draw the wine." Going therefore to the spot, she knelt down by the wine cask, and full of confidence prayed, saying, "O Lord, Thou knowest that the wine has been consumed for Thy glory and the necessities of the poor, therefore permit not that it should be a cause of scandal to my father and the family." Then rising, she made the sign of the Cross over the cask, and the wine began to flow abundantly. And giving thanks, she carried it to them, but said nothing of the miracle.[1] Bartholomew was not himself a witness of what he relates, which happened, he says, "before he knew her." The event, in fact, is placed by Carapelli, in his *Corso Cronotastico*, as far back as the year previous to her reception of the Dominican habit, but the expressions used by F. Raymund in the Legend oblige us to assign it to this period of her life, when she had her father's permission to dispense the goods of his household. He adds that "the thing was known thoughout all Siena, and caused great wonder," and the citizens

[1] Process, 1317.

still speak of "the cask of St. Catherine," when they wish to describe something which never comes to an end.

But Catherine's charity was not confined to the easy exercise of almsgiving. How often, as she passed through the streets of Siena, seeking out fresh objects who needed relief, must she not have meditated over the words in the Gospel, "I was sick, and ye visited Me." They sounded in her heart as the Voice of her Beloved, and she may have responded in those other words, "I will rise and will go about the city: in the streets and the broad ways, I will seek Him whom my soul loveth." If some things that are related of her service of the sick seem to pass the limit of what is possible to flesh and blood, let it never be forgotten that Catherine, possessed of that magnificent gift, "the perfection of faith," beheld in each poor sufferer to whom she ministered nothing less than the person of her Lord. She sought Him then in the streets and broad ways of her native city, and she found Him in the hospitals of the lepers, and wherever sickness had assumed its most terrible and repulsive forms.

There was at that time in Siena a poor woman named Cecca, who, falling sick and being entirely destitute, was received into one of the city hospitals, which, being very poor, was barely able to supply her with necessaries. At last, her malady increasing, she became covered with leprosy; and no one in the hospital choosing to have the care of such a case, it was agreed to send her to the leper-house, which in Siena was outside the Porta Romana, on the spot now called St. Lazzaro, about a mile out of the city. But before she was removed thither, Catherine, hearing of the matter, went to the hospital, and first visiting the poor sufferer and reverently kissing her, she offered to serve her daily with her own hands, and to supply her with all she might need, if they would allow her to remain where she was. Her offer was accepted, and from that day she came to visit the poor woman morning and evening, dressing her wounds and doing all that was requisite for her "with as much care and reverence as if she had been her own mother."

At first Cecca took her charitable services in very good part,

but as time went on, and she grew accustomed to see the holy virgin bestowing on her a care and attention such as no hired servant would have rendered, there arose in her a sentiment of pride, so that, far from rendering any thanks to her benefactress, she took all that she did as a matter of duty, and as no more than she had a right to expect. If anything was done otherwise than pleased her, she would reproach and revile her with such unseemly words as might be addressed to a bond slave. If Catherine came to the hospital a little later than usual, having been detained by her devotions in church, Cecca would greet her in mocking and bitter terms: "Good morning, my lady-queen of Fontebranda," she would say; "where has my lady been so long? At the Church of the Friars, I'll be bound; it seems that my lady-queen can never have enough of those Friars!" Then Catherine, without replying, would go about her work; and when she saw her time, would speak to her in her accustomed lowly and gentle manner, saying, "Good mother, have patience; I am a little late, it is true, but all your wants shall be seen to presently." Then lighting the fire and putting on water, she would prepare the food, and serve it with such sweet words that Cecca herself could only wonder at her forbearance. This went on for some time, to the admiration of all who knew it, with one notable exception. Lapa was much aggrieved both at the service her daughter had undertaken, and the ungrateful return she met with; and she remonstrated in no gentle terms, saying, "Daughter, if this goes on, you will in your turn become a leper, a thing I will never put up with, wherefore, I charge you, give over this business." "Have no fear about that, dear mother," she replied; "what I do for this poor woman I do for God, and He will not let me suffer for it." At length, however, as though to test her to the uttermost, He permitted that the leprosy should indeed attack the hands with which she daily dressed the infected sores of her patient; and those who before had praised her charity, now blamed her imprudence. More than this, they avoided her company as one contaminated, and spoke of her with disgust and contempt. All this in no way moved or disturbed her: she

counted her body as dust, and cared not what became of it, so long as she might employ it in God's service. "Cecca's sickness continued many days," says the old legend, "but Catherine thought them very few, by reason of the great love she had to our Lord, whom she thought she served in that sick woman." At last Cecca died, assisted by Catherine's prayers and exhortations up to her last moment. And as soon as she was dead Catherine washed the body and prepared it for burial; she caused the dirge and other prayers to be said for the departed soul, and then carried the body herself to the grave, and covered it with earth with her own hands. When that last act of charity had been accomplished, it pleased God that the leprosy which until then had disfigured her hands, should suddenly and completely disappear; they even remained whiter and fairer than the rest of her person, as was attested by the evidence of many eye-witnesses.

About the same time there was among the Sisters of Penance in Siena one named Palmerina, who had given herself and all her wealth, which was considerable, to the service of God; but her many good works were poisoned by a secret pride: and the praise which she heard bestowed upon Catherine excited in her such an envy that at length she could not bear to see her, or to hear her name spoken. Unable to repress her malice, she even broke forth in public, cursing and calumniating the servant of God, if ever she was named in her presence. Catherine, when she understood this, did what she could to win her over by sweet and humble words, but finding it of no avail, she contented herself with recommending the poor Sister to God. Not long after, Palmerina was seized with a grievous sickness, which when Catherine heard she hastened to her, and left nothing undone to touch her heart, fearing that if she departed this life in such a state of malice her soul would be lost eternally. But the hatred which Palmerina had conceived in her heart was so deep and bitter, that she rejected all her courtesy, returning it with reproaches and execrations, and bidding her depart out of her chamber. And so, growing worse, without showing any change of disposition, or having been able to receive the last sacraments,

she approached her end. Penetrated to the heart with pity for her sister's unhappy state, Catherine returned home, and casting herself prostrate on the ground, she poured out her soul before God in prayer. "O Lord," she said, "suffer it not to be that I, who ought to be to my sister an instrument of salvation, should become the cause of her everlasting woe! Are these the promises Thou didst make me when Thou didst say that I should win many souls to Thee! Doubtless my sin is the cause of this, and yet I am well assured that Thy mercies are not diminished, nor Thy hand shortened to save." But no comforting answer came to her prayer. On the contrary, she did but understand more clearly the danger of that soul which was, as it were, hanging on the very brink of destruction. The thought that she should in any way cause the loss of a soul pierced her with anguish, and she continued her prayers with many tears and groans, beseeching God, if need be, to lay on her the sins of the dying woman, and to chastise her, if only Palmerina might be spared; and raising her heart to God with the boldness of a loving confidence, she exclaimed, "Never, O Lord, will I rise from this place till Thou show mercy to my sister!" Such a prayer, as the event proved, had power to pierce the clouds. For three days and nights the sick woman lay, as it seemed, at the point of death, and yet unable to depart, all which time was spent by Catherine in unwearied and earnest intercession for her. At last, as it were, she wrested the sword of God's justice out of His hand, and obtained for the dying woman grace to see the enormity of her sin, and truly to repent of it. When next Catherine visited her chamber, she was received with love and reverence; and, as well as she could, Palmerina signified her deep contrition for her uncharitable conduct, and besought the Saint to pardon her; after which, receiving the sacraments of Holy Church, she gave up her soul to her Maker.

After her departure out of this life it pleased God to make known to Catherine that the soul of her sister had indeed, through her means, been saved. He showed her also how beautiful that soul had become in its state of grace, decked with a loveliness that no tongue of man is able to express. Then He said to her,

"How sayest thou, daughter, is not this a fair and beautiful soul which through thy care has been recovered from the hands of the enemy? What man or woman would refuse to suffer somewhat for the winning of so noble a creature? If I, the Sovereign Beauty, was nevertheless so overcome by the love and beauty of man's soul that I refused not to come down from heaven and to suffer labour and reproaches for many years, and in the end to shed My blood for his redemption, how much more ought you to labour one for another, and do what in you lieth for the recovery of a soul? And for this cause have I shown it to you that hereafter you might be more earnest about the winning of souls, and induce others also to do the same." Catherine thanked our Lord with all humility, and besought Him to vouchsafe her the grace of seeing the state of such souls as she might hereafter converse with, in order that she might be the more moved to seek their salvation; a grace which she received, and that in so abundant a measure that, as her biographer says, "she saw more distinctly the souls than the bodies of those who approached her." Many years later F. Raymund, being then her confessor, took occasion to rebuke her for not preventing those who came to see her from kneeling in her presence, a custom which gave great offence to some who observed it. "God knows," she replied, "I do not often notice the outward gestures of those who come to see me; I am so engaged beholding their souls, that I pay little attention to their bodies." "How, mother," he said, "do you see their souls?" "Yes," she replied, "our Lord deigned to grant me that grace, when in answer to my prayer He withdrew from eternal flames a soul that was perishing. He clearly made me see the beauty of that soul, and since that time I seldom see any one without becoming conscious of their interior state. O father," she continued, "could you but know the beauty of one immortal soul, you would think it little to give your life a hundred times over for its salvation."

Meanwhile a great and sorrowful change was preparing for the household of the Fullonica. Giacomo, the tender father and the brave and honest citizen, was drawing to his end. Between him and his saintly daughter there had existed a mutual sympathy

which added a deeper character to the tie of blood by which they were united. Catherine daily prayed for her father's salvation, whilst he beheld her sanctity with a love mingled with reverence, and trusted by her intercession to find favour with God when his last hour should come. And now at length it seemed close at hand; he was attacked by his last illness, and night and day Catherine knelt by his bedside assisting him with her loving words and pious exhortations. At first she prayed earnestly for his recovery, but understanding from our Lord that his time was come, and that it was not expedient for him to live longer, she bowed to the will of God, and went forthwith to her father to visit him and announce to him his approaching departure. Giacomo was resigned and ready to leave the world; and Catherine gave thanks to God when she saw his holy dispositions. Yet her deep filial love could not rest satisfied, without seeking an assurance from God, not only that her father's soul should depart in good hope of a blessed eternity, but also that it might be granted to him to pass at once out of this sorrowful life to the joys of heaven, without tasting the pains of purgatory. This, however, she understood from our Lord could not be granted; because though her father had led a virtuous life and done many good works, among which one was his maintenance of her in the holy state she had chosen, yet his soul had contracted some rust of earthly conversation which in justice must be purified in the fires of purgatory. "O most loving Lord!" rejoined Catherine, "how may I abide the thought that the soul of my dear father who nourished and brought me up, and from whom I have received so many proofs of loving goodness, should now go forth to suffer in the flames of purgatory? I entreat Thee permit not that he depart hence until, by some means or other, his soul shall have been so perfectly cleansed of its stains as to need no other purgation." Our Lord in His amazing pity condescended to grant her request. Though Giacomo's strength seemed utterly spent, yet whilst Catherine continued as it were to wrestle with Almighty God in prayer, it was plainly seen that his soul could not depart, but was in some way held within his body. At last when she saw

that the justice of God must needs be satisfied, she spoke as follows:—"O most merciful Lord! if Thy justice must indeed have its course, I beseech Thee turn it on me, and whatever pains are appointed for my father, lay the same on me and I will willingly bear them." "Daughter," He replied, "I am content that it should be so; therefore the pains due to thy father I lay on thee, to bear in thy body even to thy life's end." Catherine joyfully gave thanks to God for this grant of her request, and hastening to her father's dying bed, she filled his heart with comfort and hope, and did not quit him till he had drawn his last sigh. And at the very instant that his soul had departed out of the body she was attacked by a grievous pain in the side, which from that day never left her. She made little of the suffering, however, rejoicing in her inmost heart to think of the blessedness of the departed soul; and when others in the house were weeping and lamenting the loss of so good a father, she who loved him better than them all was seen to smile sweetly as she arranged the body on the bier with her own hands, saying to herself with a joyful countenance, "Dear father, would God I were as you are now! Our Lord be blessed!"[1]

Giacomo's death took place on the 22nd of August, 1368.[2] On the evening of the same day Catherine went to the neighbouring church to pay her devotions, while Lapa retired to an inner chamber, and there gave free vent to her sorrow. It happened that a poor man knocked at the door of the house to ask an alms, but no one heard him, for the servants were all gone out, and Lapa was too much absorbed in her grief to attend to anything else. Catherine, however, had a full knowledge of what was passing, and returning home she made her mother promise never again to permit that any person should leave their door without relief. Lapa, astonished at her daughter's knowledge of the circumstance, gave the promise and kept it.[3] Caffarini in his de-

[1] Leg., Part 2, ch. vi.; Sup., Part 1, Trat. 2, § 7.

[2] It is so registered in the Necrology of St. Dominic's Church, and the date fixes the chronology of this part of St. Catherine's life.

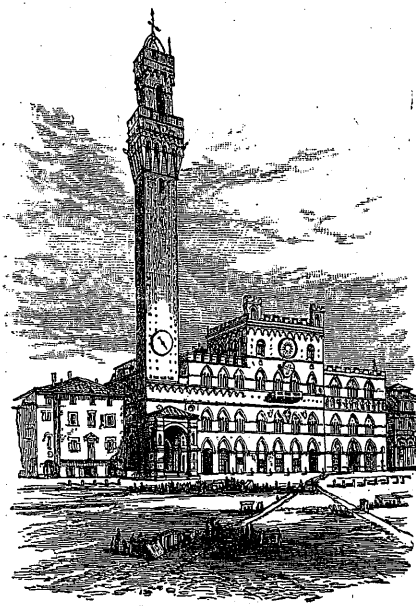
[3] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 5, § 1.

position speaks of the pain which from that day caused Catherine continued suffering. Yet she bore it not only patiently but gladly, and if any one asked what ailed her, would answer gaily, "*Sentio un pici dolce fianco.*" For to her, indeed, it brought a sweet confidence that the father she had loved so tenderly was now beyond the reach of suffering.

As Catherine had procured that her father's soul should not pass through the fires of purgatory, so she also delivered her mother from a yet more grievous danger. Lapa, though a good woman in her way, was inordinately attached to the things of this life, and had a great horror of death. After the loss of her husband she fell ill, and Catherine praying for her recovery, understood from our Lord that it would be for her happiness if she were to die then, inasmuch as she would thereby escape many grievous trials. Catherine, therefore, endeavoured to bring her mother to accept the holy will of God, but entirely without success. Lapa would not hear the name of death so much as mentioned in her presence, and implored her daughter to obtain her recovery. The answer she received to her prayer was to this effect, "Tell thy mother who is unwilling to die *now*, that the day will come when she will sigh for death and not obtain it." Some days later Lapa died without having received the sacraments, or, as it seemed, resigned herself to God's will. Catherine was in great anguish, and those who were present, among whom were Lisa and two of the Sisters of Penance, heard her sobbing and repeating aloud, "Ah, Lord God! are these the promises that Thou gavest me that none of mine should perish? I will not leave Thy presence till Thou hast restored my mother to me alive." Her prayer was granted: Lapa did indeed arise from the bed of death, and lived to a great age; but she had so much to endure in the course of her long life, from the loss of worldly prosperity and the death of her children and grandchildren and all whom she held most dear, that, as our Lord had foretold, she often complained that "He had riveted her soul in her body, so that it could not escape." This event is assigned by Raymund to the month of October, 1370.

CHAPTER VIII

The Fall of the Twelve, 1368



PALAZZA PUBBLICO, SIENO

IN the very heart of Siena is a spot to which every street converges as to a common centre, and which in the days of the Republic was known as the *Piazza del Campo*. It bears another name now, but we shall retain the title which was familiar to St. Catherine's ears, and which has found a place in the poetry of Dante.[1] The shape of this famous Piazza is semicircular, like that of an amphitheatre, and its whole appearance seems to suggest the idea of a republican forum. It

[1] "Quando vivea piu glorioso, disse
Liberamente nel Campo di Siena
Ogni vergogna deposta, s'afflisse."—Purg. xi.

This name has been exchanged in our day for that of the *Piazza Vittorio Emanuele*.

is surrounded by public offices, the most remarkable of which is the Palazzo Pubblico, a noble building, finished about fifty years before the time of which we write, and assigned to the use of the Executive Government. It may be taken as a fair monument of the ideas which prevailed at the time of its erection. The frescoes which decorate the great hall called the *Sala della Pace* represent, in a series of allegories, the republic of Siena maintaining peace, yet ready for war; the beloved city being personified by a majestic figure, seated and clad in baronial robes. All around her appear the symbols of those virtues which alone can form the sure foundations of a state, Concord, Wisdom, and Magnanimity; while the three theological and four cardinal virtues remind us that it is a Christian and not a pagan republic which is here represented. On another wall appears a painting of the city itself, girt about with moat and battlement, but, as it would seem in the mind of the painter, only strong in her military defences that she may more surely preserve to her people the blessings of peace; for peasants stream through the open gates bringing into the town the produce of their farms. The streets are full of busy citizens; we see the craftsmen at their trade, merchants leading mules laden with bales of goods, a hawking party setting out for their sport, and the plain outside the walls scattered over with huntsmen, while in the open squares within, there are young girls dancing, and little children at play. Nay, we even have a school of the fourteenth century presented to our eyes, and the schoolmaster is there watching his scholars, while the sculptured figures of Geometry, Astronomy, and Philosophy remind us that in a free and well-governed state, science and the arts will be sure to flourish. And as though to complete the moral of his pictured epic, the artist gives in his last fresco a hideous representation of the reverse of the medal. He shows us Tyranny, with all its attendant monsters of cruelty, injustice, and fraud. The same city again appears, but no longer the scene of peace and plenty; the streets are now filled with crime and bloodshed, and are as revolting to look upon as before they were beautiful and attractive. Ambrogio Lorenzetti, himself one

of the magistrates of the republic, was the painter of these grand political allegories, which read many a wholesome lesson to those before whose eyes they were daily displayed. Nor was he content with conveying his instructions by means of his pencil only, for under each painting he added a versified explanation, in which, as in the frescoes themselves, are conveyed the doctrines of Aristotle, whose teaching was at that time held in such great esteem.

The palace has its chapel, too, erected as a votive offering after the great plague of 1348, in which mass was said very early for the convenience of the market people. And attached to the chapel is the beautiful bell-tower, the *Torre del Mangia*, as it is called, a thing of such grace that Leonardo da Vinci is said to have travelled to Siena for the sole purpose of beholding it. The great bell that hangs there bears inscribed on it the Ave Maria; and in olden times the figure of a man stood by the bell, which was made by mechanism to strike the hours with a hammer. The citizens bestowed on this figure the appellation of *Il Mangia*, which was possibly that of the bell-founder, and hence the tower derives its name.

No one who has once stood in the Campo of Siena will easily forget the scene; that forum which we re-people with the stalwart citizens who struggled here five centuries ago to preserve their republican institutions; that quaint old palace, so rich in its historic memories lifting to the clouds its graceful campanile, whence, still as ever, thrice a day comes the call to prayer. We like to think that Catherine's eyes must often have rested on it, and that her ear must have caught those sounds falling shrill and clear through the morning air, announcing that the hour was come for the citizens of Siena to go forth to work. At the summons she, too, went forth to her work and to her labour until the evening; sometimes she even anticipated the signal when the work was pressing, as when the hours of some poor criminal, to whose scaffold she was hastening, were already numbered.[1] And many times she must have passed the Fonte Gaja in the midst of the

[1] "Poi la mattina, *innanzi la Campana*, audai a lui."—Letter 97.

Piazza, destined one day to bestow its name on the sculptor who was to decorate it with his bas-reliefs; and whose chisel was also to reproduce the very act of charity in which Catherine had on one such morning been engaged.[1] Truly, these are but fancies, yet localities are solemn things. We perish, and they endure: they stand now as they stood centuries ago, with a thousand memories hanging about their walls; memories of things that perish not when all that is mortal of us has fallen into dust: the fire of genius, the self-devotion of the patriot, the heroism of the saint.

To the Piazza del Campo, then, I must now conduct my readers, interrupting the narrative of Catherine's personal history for a brief moment, in order to notice some important changes which in the year 1368 were taking place in the government of her native city. Within a month after the death of Giacomo Benincasa a fresh revolution broke out in Siena. The "Twelve," who had held the chief rule since 1355, had by this time lost favour with the fickle populace. Assisted by the nobles and particularly by the powerful, though rival, families of the Tolomei and the Salimbeni, the malcontents rose against the magistrates, and assembling in the Campo, soon made themselves masters of the Palazzo Pubblico. They met with but a feeble resistance, and almost without a struggle the power of the Twelve was abolished. But the two parties who had united to bring about this revolution found themselves at variance one with another, when it became a question what form of government was to replace that which had been overthrown. The nobles being for the moment masters of the situation proclaimed the restoration of the old Sienese consulate; and ten consuls were appointed, two from each of the great families of the Malevolti, the Salimbeni, the Tolomei, the Saraceni, and the Piccolomini, with every one of which, Catherine, as we shall see, had close relations. But the popular leaders resolved not to be excluded from power; and unable to

[1] Jacopo della Quercia, called "Della Fonte" in memory of his works at this fountain, is also the author of a beautiful bas-relief representing Catherine bestowing her garment on Jesus Christ in the person of a poor pilgrim.

come to terms, the two parties once more appealed to the Emperor Charles IV., and invited him to act as moderator between them. The first step taken by Charles was to send Malatesta Unghero to Siena as his Imperial Vicar with a body of 800 German soldiers, with whose aid he trusted to secure possession of the city; but the haughty Sienese nobles resented the humiliation, and sounded the call to arms. A bloody street fight ensued, in which, after disputing every inch of ground with fruitless valour, the nobles were driven out of the city and forced once more to retire to their mountain fastnesses. A new government was now installed, which was a coalition of various parties. It consisted of fifteen persons, eight chosen from the most plebeian ranks, out of a class of citizens who had not hitherto been admitted to any power in the state; four from the party of the "Twelve," and the remaining three from that of the "Nine." This government was known by the name of the "Reformers" (Riformatori), and the fifteen magistrates received the title of "Defenders of the Republic."

They did not keep the ascendancy they had gained without a struggle. Though a few of the adherents of the "Twelve" were admitted among the Riformatori, their party as a whole had been crushed; and to regain their old footing in the state they leagued with some of the defeated nobles, and agreed once more to call in the aid of the emperor. In the January, then, of 1369, Charles entered Siena at the head of his troops. He could reckon on the firm support of the Salimbeni, who were suspected at aiming at the sovereign power.

Charles was just then sorely in want of money, and it was commonly whispered that his plan was to make himself master of the city and then sell it to the Pope. His first act excited the suspicion of the citizens. It was a proposal that they should deliver up into his keeping four strong fortresses, together with the stronghold of Talamon on the sea-coast, which was the key of the republic. These haughty demands being rejected, Charles thought to carry the day by a *coup-de-main*, and together with his adherents in the city, concerted plans for a joint attack on the

Palazzo Pubblico. But the spirit of the old Roman tribunes seemed to awaken in the hearts both of the people and their rulers. In defence of their liberties they showed themselves fearless alike of emperor or nobles, and their brave captain, Menzano, undauntedly attacked the well-armed Imperial troops, and put them to flight. The emperor found himself in a position of the greatest peril: for seven hours he watched the struggle from the windows of the Tolomei Palace, and saw the streets piled up with dead and dying as the struggle was ten times renewed. He listened to the sound of the combat as it swept on towards the city gates, telling him of the ignominious rout of his followers. Then fearing for his personal safety, he escaped to the stronger palace of the Salimbeni, and there awaited in anguish the end of that terrible day. It resulted in the complete triumph of the popular cause. "The emperor," says the republican chronicler, Neri di Donato, "was alone in the Salimbeni Palace, a prey to abject fear. He wept, he prayed, he embraced everybody, apologising for his *mistake*, and at the same time offering his forgiveness. Every one, he said, had betrayed him, the Twelve, the Salimbeni, and his own vicar Malatesta. Nothing that had been done was his doing, he was only anxious at once to depart from the city." This was not so easy, for he had neither horses nor money. Menzano, however, at that moment could afford to be generous, and restored to him some of the property which had been seized by the mob. Charles provided himself with the means of departure, but before taking his leave had the meanness to demand a compensation in money for the affronts he had endured, and the favours (!) he had granted. He was asked to name his price; twenty thousand gold florins, he modestly replied, payable in four years. It was an answer fitter for a shopkeeper than an emperor; but the citizens threw him the first year's contribution with well-merited contempt, acquiring as their sole condition that he would at once rid them of his presence.

After the signal triumph of the popular party, the nobles, once more expelled from the city, continued to carry on a desultory warfare for the purpose of recovering their civil rights; nor was it

until the June of 1369 that peace was re-established through the friendly intervention of the Florentines. The nobles were recalled, and allowed to hold some offices in the Government, though still excluded from the chief power, and thus a certain amount of harmony was restored. But the seeds of bitter dissension had been sown among the rival parties; and far from seeking to heal these, it was rather the secret object of the republican leaders to foment them. They dreaded nothing so much as a solid and lasting alliance between the various noble families whom they regarded as their common enemy. The Salimbeni, in particular, had shown themselves during the late events the firm adherents of the emperor, and were naturally therefore the object of special distrust, a fact not to be lost sight of as explaining the jealousy afterwards excited by Catherine's close friendship with this family. No efforts were therefore spared to keep up the hereditary feuds between the Tolomei and the Salimbeni, who, as respective heads of the Guelph and Ghibeline factions, were the Capulets and Montagues of Siena; so that the internal harmony enjoyed by the republic was of a doubtful sort; and Larenzetti's frescoed ideal of a state made strong by concord presented a sorrowful contrast to the reality.

In all these sad scenes the Benincasa family had borne their part; they belonged to the party of the Twelve, and shared its ruin. Giacomo indeed did not live to see the outbreak of the revolution, but Catherine's brothers were exposed to imminent danger, and on one occasion owed their lives to the respect with which the populace regarded their saintly sister. The story is thus told by the author of the Miracoli:—"It happened at that time that there was a revolt in Siena, and the brothers of Catherine being opposed to the victorious party, and their enemies seeking either to kill them or do them some hurt, as they had done to others, there came to the house in great haste one of their intimate friends, saying, 'The whole band of your enemies is coming here to seize you; come along with me at once, and I will place you safe in the Church of St. Anthony (which was near the house), where some of your friends have already taken refuge.'

At these words, Catherine, who was present, rose from her seat, and said to her friend, 'They shall certainly not go to St. Anthony's, and I am heartily sorry for those who are already there,' and then she bid him depart in God's name. As soon as he was gone, she took her mantle and putting it on, said to her brothers, 'Now, come with me and fear nothing;' and so she went between them and led them straight through the Contrada, which was occupied by their enemies. Meeting and passing through the midst of them, they inclined to her with reverence, and so all passed through safe and sound. Then she conducted her brothers to the Hospital of St. Mary,[1] and recommended them to the care of the master of the hospital, and said to them, 'Remain concealed here for three days; at the end of that time you can come home in safety.' And so they did. When the three days were passed, the city was quiet again, but all who had taken refuge at St. Anthony's were either killed or cast into prison. Soon afterwards, Catherine's brothers were fined one hundred gold florins, which they paid, and so were left in peace." Nevertheless the family never recovered its former prosperity. Bartolo, indeed, appears to have held office in the republic under the Riformatori, and his name appears as one of the "Defenders" for the May and June of 1370. But in that same year he and his two brothers, Benincasa and Stephen, removed to Florence, where they were inscribed as Florentine citizens. Even there their bad fortune followed them, and we find from one of Catherine's letters to F. Bartholomew Dominic, that her great friend, Nicolas Soderini, had come to their help and lent them money. Their children meanwhile remained at Siena under the care of Lapa, and the business at the Fullonica seems to have been carried on by some other member of the family, for it continued to be Catherine's home for many years later. All these troubles, and the loss of worldly prosperity which they entailed, brought sad distress to the poor mother, and what was worse, she did not always meet from her sons the return which her

[1] The Hospital of St. Mary, that is, of Santa Maria della Scala, of which we shall speak in a subsequent chapter.

maternal devotion to their interests justly deserved. Among Catherine's letters three are preserved addressed to Benincasa, her eldest brother, besides one which is a joint letter to them all. To Benincasa she writes, consoling him in his misfortunes, but at the same time gravely reproving him for his ingratitude to their mother. "Try and bear your trials with patience, my dear brother," she writes, "and do not forget what you owe to our mother, for you are bound to show her gratitude by the commandments of God. We will admit the fact that you had it not in your power to assist her; but even if you had possessed the power, I do not feel sure you would have used it, for you have not given her so much as one good word. You will pardon me in saying this; you know I could not have said it if I did not love you."[1] In the other letter, addressed to all three, she urges them to mutual charity. "You, Benincasa," she says, "as the eldest, must make yourself the last of all; and you, Bartolo, must be less than the least; and you, Stephen, I beg of you to be subject to your brothers, that so you may all live together in the sweetness of charity."[2]

Lisa accompanied her husband to Florence, and her separation from Catherine was keenly felt by both. From childhood her sister-in-law's sympathy and affection had been Catherine's best earthly solace. No souls are so capable of solid and lasting friendship as those whose hearts are truly detached, for they, and they alone, can love *in God;* and to them belongs the happy privilege of giving free course to a tenderness, which, binding them only the closer to His sacred Heart, is exempt from all peril of selfishness. Such a soul was that of Catherine of Siena, whose heart was keenly alive to all that is most holy in human affection, and among whose characteristics this one is to be noted, that she loved and was beloved beyond what is ordinarily granted to mortals. And it is precisely at this period of her life that we begin to hear of some whose names will ever be associated with her own, and who are dear and venerable to us, for this one reason that they were the chosen friends of Catherine. As the

[1] Letter 250. [2] Letter 252.

world began to make larger demands on her, she was careful, with her accustomed prudence, to have one or other of her religious sisters constantly in her company. One of these, who is very early named in the Legend as her habitual companion, was Catherine Ghetti, or Enghecti,[1] whom we learn from the "Processus" to have been one of her nieces. But among all the Mantellate none was admitted to such close familiarity with her as a young widow named Alexia, of the noble family of the Saraceni. After her husband's death, she devoted all her wealth to pious objects, and took the habit of Penance. She seems to have been well deserving of Catherine's affection, and was, says F. Raymund, "the first of her disciples, not in order of time but in that of perfection." After her first acquaintance with the Saint, she became so attached to her that she could not separate from her, and by her advice distributed all she possessed to the poor, and embraced a life of great devotion and penance. "Towards the end of her life," he continues, "Catherine made her the depository of all her secrets," and as we shall see, they were very seldom parted, Alexia sometimes entertaining her friend as a guest in her own house for days and weeks together.

It is evident from what has been already said, that at the time of the revolution of 1368, Catherine was gradually becoming known to her fellow-citizens. During the time of her strictest retirement she had been almost forgotten. A few years before, indeed, there had been a momentary stir and gossip when it was rumoured about that the Mantellate had received into their society the dyer Benincasa's youngest daughter. But the life of shop and market went on as before in the busy streets, political feuds and bloody revolutions broke in many a disastrous storm, and still the citizens for the most part remained unconscious of the presence among them of her whose fame should one day

[1] In a copy of the register of the Sisters of Penance, which is in the possession of the writer, carefully annotated in the margin by the hand of Signor Grottanelli, Catherine Ghetti's name has this little note scribbled against it: "*nipote di S. Cat. Proc. MS. fol.* 28, *recto.*" We do not know which of St. Catherine's numerous brothers or sisters was her parent, but, like most of the Mantellate, she was probably a widow.

be their proudest boast. Little by little, however, it became whispered about that the young maiden, who day after day was to be seen going to and fro on her errands of charity, was a great servant of God. One had beheld her in ecstasy in the Friars' church; another had sat with her at her father's table, and seen how, amid the abundance of good cheer around her, she contented herself with a mouthful of bread and a raw lettuce. The story of the wonderful butt of wine had been in every one's mouth, and readily appealed to the wonder of the multitude; and hence they began to think of her as a saint, and to regard her with no little reverence. We have seen her presence respected by the mob at the very moment they were thirsting for the blood of their enemies. Those ferocious men in pursuit of their prey had stopped short at the sight of one in whose form they recognised her who had stood by the sick-beds of their wives and daughters; who had found her way into their hovels when they were dying of hunger, and fed them, as it were, by stealth; of one, moreover, whose life, they knew, was not supported by meat and drink, like the lives of those around them, and of whom it might almost literally be said, that "she had a meat to eat that the world knew not of."

Nevertheless, as is often the case, the very enthusiasm of her admirers excited in the minds of some who did *not* know her a totally contrary sentiment; and there were not wanting those who found matter of blame precisely in those very things which were quoted as proofs of her sanctity. Bartholomew Dominic says that at first he used to be publicly derided for his folly in going to see such a person, and that the examples of her charity were so far beyond the comprehension of worldly minds, that what they could not understand they did not fear to judge as presumptuous. Among those who were loudest in their condemnation was a certain Franciscan professor of philosophy, named Father Lazzarino of Pisa, who had been sent to the convent of his Order in Siena, where he was at that time lecturing with great success. He was a man of no ordinary learning, and although a Franciscan, closely followed the theology of St. Thomas. "It

was at the period," says F. Bartholomew Dominic, "when Catherine was still abiding in her secret cell, before she appeared much in public. She never at that time spoke to or saw any man, except her own family, without leave of her confessor, and yet the odour of her sanctity had filled the whole city. Those who were simple and right of heart praised her; but the proud and envious blamed and detracted, and among these was Lazzarino. One day, on the Vigil of St. Catherine the Martyr, he came to my room at about vesper time and proposed that we should go together and see Catherine. I consented, believing him touched with compunction, though in reality he only wished to find matter for speech against her; I therefore obtained the permission of her confessor, F. Thomas della Fonte, and we set out together. We entered her chamber, where Lazzarino seated himself on a chest that was in the room; Catherine sat on the floor, as was her custom; whilst I remained standing. There was silence for a few minutes, which was at length broken by Lazzarino: 'I have heard many persons speak of your sanctity,' he said, 'and of the great understanding which God has given you of the Holy Scriptures; I wished, therefore, to come and see you, hoping to hear something that would be of edification to my soul.' Catherine replied with her usual humility, 'And I, too, rejoice to see you, for I think our Lord must have intended to give me an opportunity of profiting by that learning with which you daily instruct your disciples. I hoped that you might be led out of charity to help my poor soul, and I beg you to do so for the love of God.' The conversation continued in this strain for some time, till as the evening drew on, Lazzarino rose to depart, saying that it was late, and he could not stay, but hoped to come again another day at a more suitable hour. Catherine knelt, and asked his blessing, which Lazzarino gave. Then she begged him to pray for her, and more out of politeness than sincerity he asked her to do the same for him, which she readily promised. He went away, thinking that Catherine was a good woman no doubt, but far from deserving any extraordinary reputation.

"The night following when he rose and set himself to prepare

the lecture which he was next day to deliver to his pupils, Lazzarino began, he knew not why, to weep abundantly. He dashed aside his tears, and tried to set to his work, but in spite of himself they continued to flow, and he could not divine their cause. He asked himself in perplexity: 'What is the reason of all this? Did I drink anything before I went to rest, or have I slept with my head uncovered?' In the morning they came to summon him to the lecture-room, but it was impossible for him to speak to his class. At the first attempt he broke down, and continued weeping like a child. He went back to his cell ashamed of his own weakness. 'What ails me, I wonder,' he said to himself, 'can my mother have died suddenly, or has my brother fallen in battle?' So the whole day passed, till when evening came he fell asleep, weary and exhausted, but soon awoke, and then his tears began to flow afresh, and he could not restrain them. Then he set himself to reflect if perchance he might not have committed some grave fault, and begged of God, if so, to make it known to his conscience; and as he was thus examining himself, a little voice seemed to whisper in his heart, 'Have you so quickly forgotten how yesterday you judged My servant Catherine in a spirit of pride, and asked her to pray for you out of formal politeness?'

"As soon as Lazzarino saw the truth, and owned his fault, his tears ceased, and now his heart became full of the most eager desire to return to Catherine and once more to converse with her. At the first break of day he came and knocked at the door of her chamber. Catherine was no stranger to what had passed, and opening her door, Lazzarino at once prostrated at her feet. Catherine also prostrated out of humility: then they sat down side by side, and Lazzarino, whose pride had all melted away, conjured her to direct him in the way of salvation. Catherine at last moved by his entreaties answered in these words: 'The way of salvation *for you* is to despise the vanities and applause of the world, and to become poor, humble, and despised after the pattern of Jesus Christ and your holy father, St. Francis.' At these words the professor saw that Catherine had read his inmost soul; that she was conscious of the pride and ambition which nestled

there like a serpent; and with renewed tears he promised at once to do whatsoever she might command him. And he was as good as his word, for at her bidding he distributed his money and the useless furniture of his cell, and even his very books. He only kept a few notes to help him in preaching, and embracing the poverty of his rule led thenceforth a holy life. He continued one of Catherine's most faithful disciples, and his devotion to her was so great that his worldly friends used to call him '*be-Catherined*' (*Caterinato*), an epithet very commonly bestowed on those who were known to frequent her company."[1]

[1] This story does not occur in the Legend; it is related by F. Bartholomew Dominic in his deposition, and, as we see by his express words, belongs to the early period of the Saint's life, though no precise date is given. Probably, however, it happened in the year 1369. See Process., 1374.

CHAPTER IX

Heavenly Favours, 1370

THE departure from Siena of Catherine's brothers, which took place some time in the year 1370, caused many changes in the household of the Fullonica. It was no longer the bustling scene of trade that it had formerly been, and Catherine's domestic life was naturally more free from restraint. Lapa and the rest of the family had long ceased to offer any opposition to the manner of life which she had embraced; her example seems even to have drawn her elder sister Lisa[1] to imitate it, for we find her numbered among the "Sisters of the Hospital," a title bestowed on those who served the hospital of Campo Reggio, which was formerly attached to the convent of San Domenico, but was afterwards made over to the Tertiary Sisters.

The year 1370 was a memorable one to Catherine; and at no period of her history are the records of her supernatural graces more abundant, or more precisely recorded. It is no easy matter to speak of such things; she herself shrank from doing so, and would often say that to put into human words the secret intercourse of a soul with its Creator was like offering clay instead of gold, or dipping a rare jewel in the mire. Entering on this chapter in her life, therefore, we are prompted to exclaim with

[1] Not her sister-in-law Lisa, who accompanied her husband to Florence, but her own sister of the same name, who died in the plague of 1374.

Another of these Hospital Tertiaries was Catherine "della Spedaluccio," to whom two of the Saint's letters are addressed, one of her most intimate disciples. Catherine herself is sometimes spoken of as one of the Sisters of the Hospital, which she doubtless served.

the prophet, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips!"[1] and to desire that the Seraph might touch our mouth also with the coal from off the altar, as reverently drawing aside the veil, we dare to contemplate the communications between the Beloved and His chosen spouse.

From the moment when Catherine had received from our Divine Redeemer the mysterious favour of her spiritual Espousals, the prodigies of her supernatural life were constantly increasing. "Grace became so abundant in her soul," says Raymund, "that she might be said to live in ecstasy. . . . God began from that time to manifest Himself to her not only when she was alone as formerly, but even when she was in public." But whatever might have been the mysterious sweetness which Catherine was thus privileged to enjoy, she was ever seeking for something better than the purest and most Divine consolations. As she had formerly desired *the perfection of Faith*, so now she longed after *the perfection of Charity*, and the light of the Holy Spirit which illuminated her intellect gave her fully and thoroughly to comprehend in what that consisted. She understood perfection in no other sense than the substitution of the holy will of God in the place of our own perverse and disordered will. Hence she desired to have no other will, no other heart, than His; and a connected series of wonderful and beautiful revelations are related by Raymund from the MS. notes left by her confessor, F. Thomas della Fonte, which show in what manner her prayer was granted. On the eve of the feast of St. Alexis, 1370, desiring greatly to receive Holy Communion, yet dreading lest she might not be worthy, a rain of blood mingled with fire seemed to descend on her soul, "not merely washing away the stains of sin, but banishing the very first principles of evil."[2] The next day, though so ill she could scarcely rise from her bed, she went to the church, but remembering that she had been forbidden by her superiors to receive Communion, except from the hand of her confessor, she felt a great wish that he might come to say mass

[1] Isaias vi. 5, 6.

[2] *Corruzione fomitale;* see Leg. Min., 74, and note 44.

in the chapel where she was praying. F. Thomas has left recorded the circumstances that followed. He had not intended that morning to celebrate, and knew not that Catherine was in the church. But suddenly he felt his heart touched by an unusual fervour and desire for the holy mysteries, so that preparing himself at once he went to the very altar before which Catherine was kneeling, though it was never his habit to say mass there.

When he came and found her there awaiting his coming and desiring to communicate, he understood that it was our Lord who had moved him to say mass that day, and to choose that altar, contrary to his usual custom. He offered the Holy Sacrifice, therefore, and gave her Communion, and beheld how, as she was receiving, her face appeared all red and shining, and bedewed with an abundance of tears. After that she remained lost in God, and so unspeakable was the sweetness with which she was drawn to Him, that even after she came to herself she was unable for the rest of that day to utter one word to any creature. On the morrow her confessor asked her what had been the cause of such unusual devotion, and why at the moment when she received the Blessed Sacrament her face had been of that shining red. "Father," she replied, "of what colour my face may have been at that time I know not; but this I know very well: when I, unworthy wretch that I am, received the Blessed Sacrament at your hand, It drew me into Itself after such a sort, that all other things save It alone waxed loathsome to me, not only temporal things and delights of the world, but also all other comforts and pleasures, were they never so spiritual. I made my humble prayer then to our Lord, *that He would take all such comforts and delights from me, that I might take pleasure in none other thing but only in Him. I besought Him also that He would vouchsafe to take away my will, and to give me His will;* which petition He granted me, saying: 'Behold, dear daughter, now I GIVE THEE MY WILL, by the virtue whereof thou shalt be so strong, that whatever shall happen to thee from this time forward, thou shalt never be altered or moved, but shalt continue evermore in one

state.'" And this promise God fulfilled; for all who knew her were able to testify that from that moment Catherine appeared content in all events and circumstances, so that no contradiction, however vexatious, seemed to possess the least power to disturb her. Then she continued, speaking to her confessor: "Father, do you know what our Lord did to-day in my soul? He acted as a tender mother does towards a beloved infant. She extends her arms from a little distance so as to excite his desire, and when the child has wept for a few moments she smiles and catches him, clasping him closely to her heart, and there she satisfies his craving thirst. Our blessed Lord did the same with me: He showed me in the distance the Wound in His Side; the desire I felt to press my lips to it excited me to burning tears. He seemed at first to smile at my grief, and then after a few moments He came to me and took my soul in His arms, and placed my lips upon His Sacred Wound, and my soul was able to satisfy its desires, to hide itself in His Sacred Breast, and there find heavenly consolations. Oh! did you but know, you would be amazed that my heart is not utterly consumed with love, and that I still live after experiencing such a burning fire of charity!"

The same day[1] Catherine was meditating on those words of the Psalmist, "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me;", and again the thought and desire with which her soul was at that time filled found utterance in the earnest petition that our Lord would condescend utterly to take from her *her own heart and will.* Her heavenly Spouse was pleased not merely to grant her request, but moreover to make

[1] That is, July 18th. In the Legend (Part 2, ch. v.), the Communion on St. Alexis' Day is spoken of *after* the exchange of hearts and the appearance of St. Mary Magdalen. But it is expressly said that all these events, and others that followed, took place in the same year, 1370. If so, by observing the date of the several feasts, it is easy to restore them to their proper chronological order; namely, July 17th, July 20th, and July 22nd. Some days elapsed between the loss and restoration of Catherine's heart, and as the date of the latter event is fixed to the 20th of July, it is evident that this first appearance of our Lord could only have been on he 18th, *i.e.*, the day after St. Alexis.

the same known to her by a sensible sign. For it seemed to her that He appeared in His own person, and opening her side, took out her heart, and carried it away.

Two days later, being in the chapel *Delle Volte* in the Dominican Church, together with the other Sisters to whose use that chapel was assigned, she remained, when her companions had gone away, and continued her prayers; until at last, as she arose and prepared to return home, a great light surrounded her, and in the midst of the light our Lord again appeared, bearing in His hand a Heart of vermilion hue, and casting forth bright rays as of fire. Then He approached her, and once more opening her side He placed there this Heart, and said, "Daughter, the other day I took thy heart; to-day I give thee Mine, which shall henceforward serve thee in its place." And from that day it was her custom when she prayed, no longer to say as she had done before, "My God, I give Thee *my* heart," but instead, "My God, I give Thee *Thy* heart," because she knew and understood that in very deed there had been given to her in the place of her own human will and affections the will and affections of her eternal Spouse.

F. Thomas della Fonte, in speaking of this favour granted to the Saint, says that it seemed to her as if her heart had entered into the side of our Lord to be united and blended with His. Dissolved in the flames of His love, she exclaimed repeatedly, "My God, Thou hast wounded my heart! My God, Thou hast wounded my heart!" And he says that the event took place on the feast of St. Margaret (July 20th), 1370.

St. Catherine, then, was one of the first of those to whom our Lord thought fit to reveal "THE SECRET OF HIS SACRED HEART." They are her own words repeated again and again in her Dialogue and her letters. Contemplating the Body of Christ crucified on the Cross as the mystical bridge whereby the soul is to be united to its Creator, she says, "His nailed Feet are a step whereby thou mayest reach the Side which shall reveal to thee *the secret of His Heart.*"[1] . . . . "In His wounded Side you will discover the

[1] Dialogo, ch. xxvi.

love of His Heart, for all that Christ did for us, He did out of the love of His Heart. . . . Let us go to the great refuge of His charity which we shall find in the Wound of His Side, where He will unveil to us the secret of His Heart, showing us that the sufferings of His Passion, having a limit, were insufficient to manifest His infinite love, as He desired to manifest it, and to give us all that He desired to give." And in one of her letters, glancing back to the memory of these supernatural favours, she exclaims, "Place your lips to the wounded Side of the Son of God: from that opening comes forth the fire of charity, and the Blood which washes away all our sins. The soul that hides itself there and gazes on that Heart opened by love, becomes like to Him, because seeing itself so loved, it cannot refrain from loving."

Nor was this first vision the only one in which the Sacred Heart of Jesus was revealed to Catherine as the sanctuary of His love. Another day, when she was praying in the same church, she suddenly saw Jesus Christ by her side, with so wonderful a light streaming forth from His Breast that the whole of that vast building was illuminated by it.[1] This seems to have been about the same time as, or very shortly after, the events already narrated.

That there should appear from this time a change, and an extraordinary increase of Divine grace in the soul of Catherine, can be no cause for wonder. If there were those who, measuring her by their appreciation of her exterior actions, already regarded her as a saint, it is not rash to suppose that between Catherine as she was before, and after, her change of heart, there was as much difference as between a saint and an ordinary Christian. She herself testified to the fact. "Father," she said to her confessor in broken sentences, which he gathered up and preserved with reverent fidelity, "I am no longer the same. Did you but know what I experienced, surely, if it could once be known, *there is no pride that would resist it.* . . . The fire of love which burns in my soul is so great, no earthly fire could compare with it, and it seems to renew in me the purity and simplicity of a

[1] Sup., Part 1, Trat. 2, § 5.

little child, so that I feel as though I were no more than four years of age. This love of God, too, how it increases the love of our neighbour! Surely it would be the greatest earthly happiness to die for another soul!"

It was very shortly after this[1] that our Lord one day again appeared to her, in company with His Blessed Mother and St. Mary Magdalen, and asked her this question, "Daughter," He said, "what dost thou desire? *My will, or thine?*" Catherine wept when she heard the words which seemed to question the reality of the surrender she had already made; and she replied, like St. Peter, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that now I have no will and no heart but Thine." As she said this, she felt within her soul the same sweetness as St. Mary Magdalen felt when she wept at our Lord's feet; whereupon she fixed her eyes upon her. Our Lord, seeing that, and knowing the inward desire of her soul, said these words to her, "Behold, dear daughter, from this time forward I give thee Mary Magdalen to be thy mother, to whom as to a loving mother thou mayest at all times flee for special comfort; for unto her specially have I committed the care of thee." When she heard that, she gave our Lord most humble thanks, and turning herself to the Saint with great humility and reverence, she besought her to take her under her motherly protection. And from that time she began to cherish a tender devotion to that blessed Saint, and always called her her mother.

The question seems naturally to suggest itself, what was the significance of this gift to Catherine of the patronage of St. Mary Magdalen at this particular moment? The incident comes in, interrupting, as one may say, the regular course of a chain, each previous link of which is clearly connected. When we remember, however, that the entire series of these wonderful favours was manifestly intended (as the sequel will show) to be the introduc-

[1] Probably two days later, which would bring it to the feast of St. Mary Magdalen. In the Legend, the visit of that Saint seems to break the series of revelations in an unaccountable manner, which is, however, explained by a little attention to the respective dates.

tion to her public career, the appearance of her on whom the Breviary Office bestows the quite exceptional epithet of the "*Apostolorum Apostola*," will be seen to have an exquisite appropriateness.

For the rest, the separate visions we have related above, which in reality make up but one narrative, when compared and fitted one into the other, give us a clearer comprehension of the spiritual sense of that great and signal favour, the gift, namely, to our seraphic mother, St. Catherine, of the Heart of her Divine Spouse. Not that we would presume to explain, far less to explain away, the mysterious exterior sign which was the pledge and token of that surpassing favour. To students of Holy Scripture there will readily occur more than one parallel in the prophetic writings, where spiritual graces are both represented and communicated by the means of such outward symbols. But the exterior sign itself was not the favour, it was not the grace which Catherine had asked from God. What she asked and what she obtained, sealed to her by the outward sign of that magnificent gift, was that thenceforth she might love only what her Lord loved, and will only what He willed. In this, and in this alone, she was to find THE PERFECTION OF CHARITY. In this one page of her life, therefore, the page which presents her to us as the bride and client of the Sacred Heart, we find a summary of her whole spiritual doctrine.

But we have not yet come to the end of the mystic favours of this eventful year. She seemed to pass the whole month of August in a continued ecstasy,[1] during which time she received many wonderful revelations. The narrative of these exhibits to us at one and the same time her unbroken union with God, and the exquisite tenderness of her conscience. On the 3rd of August, being the eve of the feast of St. Dominic, she was praying in the church and meditating on the glory of the great patriarch of her order. About the hour of compline, F. Bartholomew Dominic chanced to enter the church, and Catherine, to whom he acted as confessor in the absence of F. Thomas, begged him

[1] Latin Sup., Part 2, Trat. 1, § 10.

to hear her, as she had something to communicate. "Perceiving her countenance all radiant with joy," he says,[1] "I accosted her, saying, 'We have certainly some good news to-day; I see you are quite joyous.' Then Catherine began to speak to me of our holy father, St. Dominic. 'Do you not see him, our blessed father?' she said; 'I see him as distinctly as I see you. How like he is to our Lord! His face is oval, grave, and sweet, and his hair and beard are the same colour!'"[2] Then she declared to him how in a vision she had beheld the Eternal Father producing from His mouth His Beloved Son; and as she contemplated Him, she beheld St. Dominic coming forth, as it were, from His breast. And a Voice declared to her, saying, "Behold, daughter, I have begotten these two sons; one by nature, the other by adoption;" amazing words, which He presently deigned to explain as follows: "As this My natural Son in His human nature was ever most perfectly obedient to Me even to death, even so was this My son by adoption obedient to Me in all points even from his childhood to his dying day, and directed all his works according to My commandments, and kept that purity both of body and soul which he received of Me in baptism, clean and unspotted until the end of his life. And as this My natural Son spake openly to the world, and gave a most clear testimony to the truth that I put in His mouth, even so did this My son by adoption preach the truth of My Gospel, as well to heretics and schismatics as also among my faithful people. And as this My natural Son sent out His disciples to publish the Gospel to all creatures, so doth this My son by adoption now at this present, and shall hereafter from time to time send out his children and brethren under the yoke of his obedience and discipline. And so for this cause is it granted to him and his, by special privilege, that they shall have the true understanding of My words and shall

[1] Process., 1330.

[2] St. Dominic had auburn hair, as we know from the description given of him by B. Cecilia. His likeness to the person of our Lord has always been a tradition in the Order, and is corroborated by an examination of his only known portrait, that preserved at Sta. Sabina, and a comparison of its features with those which tradition assigns to our Divine Saviour.

never swerve from the same. And as this My natural Son ordained the state of His holy life in deeds and words, to the salvation of souls, even so did this My son by adoption employ himself wholly, both in his doctrine and in example of life, to deliver souls from the snares of the devil, which are error and sin. For it was his principal intent when he first founded his order, to win souls out of the bondage of error and sin, and to bring them to the knowledge of truth, and to the exercise of a godly and Christian life, for which cause I liken him to My natural Son."[1]

As Catherine was declaring these things to her confessor, it chanced that her own brother, Bartolo, who was in the church, passed by, and his shadow, or the noise he made in passing, attracted Catherine's attention, so that for a moment she glanced aside to look at him. Instantly recovering herself, she broke off her words, and began to weep in silence. F. Bartholomew waited for a time till she should speak again, but finding that she remained silent, he bade her continue. "Ah, wretch that I am!" she said, "who will punish me for my fault?" "What fault?" he asked. "How!" she replied, "did you not see, that even while our Lord was showing me His great mysteries, I turned my eyes to behold a creature?" "Nevertheless," said the confessor, "I assure you the glance of your eye, of which you speak, endured so short a time I did not perceive it." "Ah, father," she said, "if you knew how sharply our Blessed Lady rebuked me for my fault, you would surely weep and lament with me." And so saying, she would speak no more of her revelations that day, but she retired to her chamber sorrowing and doing penance for her sin; and she declared afterwards that St. Paul had also appeared to her, and reproved her so roughly for that little loss of time, that she would rather suffer all the shame of the world than abide such another rebuke at the apostle's hand. "And think," she added, "what a confusion and shame that will be which all wicked and unhappy sinners shall suffer at the last day, when they shall stand before the majesty of God, seeing that the presence of only one apostle is so dreadful and intolerable. I assure you, father, that

[1] Fen., Part 2, ch. xxv.; Leg., Part 2, ch. v.

his words and countenance were so terrible to me, that if I had not had the comfort of a beautiful Lamb[1] shining with light that stood by when he spoke to me, I think my heart would not have been able to abide the same, but would have died for very sorrow."

F. Bartholomew, who on this occasion received the saint's confidence, related the whole matter afterwards to Raymund, and has besides given the narrative with every particular in his deposition. He says that Catherine wept over her offence for three hours, until at length St. Paul appeared to her again, saying, "Daughter, God has accepted thy tears, be more careful in future." And thus it pleased our Lord from time to time to put her in mind of her own frailty, specially after receiving such great revelations which might otherwise have moved her to pride.

When the feast of the Assumption came, it found Catherine so prostrate with sickness that she was unable to leave her bed. She was not then in her own home, but staying in the house of one of her companions, probably Alexia. Unable to go to the church as she desired, she took comfort in being able to see from the window of her chamber the distant walls of the Cathedral (which is dedicated to the Mother of God); and uniting in spirit with the Divine offices which were being celebrated there with great pomp on that high festival, she was permitted to hear the melody of the sacred chant as though she were present in the church; so that at the moment when the celebrant entoned in the Preface the words "*Et Te in Assumptione Beatæ Mariæ*," &c., she beheld the Sacred Virgin herself, and entered into a sweet colloquy with her.[2]

As she lay on her couch her companions from time to time

[1] Fen., Part 2, ch. xxiv. A curious typographical error has here crept into Fen's English version of this passage, where the shining *Lamb* stands as "a goodly bright *lamp*."

[2] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 6, § 6. This is the solitary occasion when the Duomo of Siena appears mentioned in the life of St. Catherine, to whom, however, it must have been dear and familiar, and whose gilded bust is now to be seen over one of the three doors of the great entrance.

caught the sound of the words she was murmuring to herself. They were simple enough. "O sweetest Jesus!" she repeated again and again; "Son of God," and then after a little pause, "and of the Blessed Virgin Mary!" "This ejaculation," says Father Fen, "was her matins and her evensong." Sometimes she prayed to her Spouse that He would deliver her from the bondage of the body and take her to Himself. "Not so, My daughter," was the reply; "I desired indeed to eat the last pasch with My disciples, yet I awaited the moment fixed by My eternal Father." Then she requested that if she must still live in this wretched world He would deign to make her participate in His sufferings. "If I cannot be with Thee now in heaven," she said, "suffer at least that on earth I may be united to Thee in Thy Passion."

Her petition was indeed granted. At this time she began to suffer both in her soul and body something of those pains which our Lord had endured both in His life and death. She often declared that the interior cross which He endured out of His desire for the salvation of souls, surpassed all His other sufferings: and this torment of desire she shared to her life's end. Many things also she at this time declared to Father Thomas concerning the Passion of our Lord, which he carefully committed to writing, and afterwards delivered to F. Raymund. Thus she interpreted those words of our Lord in the garden of Olives, "Father, let this chalice pass from Me," as signifying His will to be delivered from that same torment of desire by the hastening of His Sacred Passion, rather than as a prayer that He might not suffer. She also declared that the pains which our Lord endured for our redemption were so great, that it would have been impossible for any man to endure the same without dying a thousand times. "What man," said she, "would have believed that those thorns of His crown should have pierced through His skull into His brain? Yet so it was. Again, who would have thought that the bones of a man should have been drawn asunder and disjointed? And yet so the Prophet David saith: 'They numbered all my bones.'" And the dislocation of His bones, especially those of the Breast,

she understood to have been the most grievous of all His bodily pains. These and other meditations on the Sacred Passion appear to have occupied her during the three days succeeding the feast of the Assumption. On the 18th of the same month, being once more able to go to the church, she approached the altar in order to communicate: and as the priest, holding the sacred Host, repeated the words, "*Domine non sum dignus*," &c., she heard a Voice that answered, saying, "But I am worthy to enter into thee." When she had received, her soul was so overwhelmed by what it experienced that she scarcely found strength to return to her cell, and there lying down on the planks that formed her bed she remained for a long time motionless. Then her body was raised in the air, in the presence of three persons who beheld it, remaining so without support. After which, being again lowered on her couch, she began in a low voice to say such sweet and admirable things that her companions as they listened could not refrain from tears. She prayed for many persons by name, among others for her confessor who was in the Friars' Church, thinking of nothing just then calculated to move him to special fervour. But suddenly, as she prayed unknown to him, he felt his heart touched by a devotion to which he had until then been a stranger. Shortly after, it happened by chance that one of Catherine's companions came to speak with him, and said, "Father, Catherine was praying much for you at such an hour." Then he understood why at that hour he had felt so unusual a devotion. He proceeded to inquire more closely what it was she had said, and found she had asked of God for him and for others the promise of their eternal salvation. She had been seen also to stretch forth her hand as she prayed, saying, "Promise me that you will grant it." Then it seemed as if she had felt some sharp pain, which forced her to sigh, exclaiming, "Praised be our Lord Jesus Christ!" as she was used to do when she felt any bodily suffering. F. Thomas soon after went to see her, and desired her to relate to him the whole matter. She obeyed, and when she came to that point where she prayed for certain special persons, she said to him: 'Father, when I prayed for you and for others, that our

Lord would vouchsafe to grant you everlasting life, it pleased His goodness to give me an assured comfort in my heart that indeed it should be so. With that I besought Him that He would grant me some token of the certainty thereof; not that I doubted anything of His promise, but because I was desirous to have some memorial of the same. Then He bade me stretch out my hand; and I did so, and He put into my hand a nail, and closed the same so fast within my hand that I felt a great pain as if there had been a nail stricken into it with a hammer. And so (Our Lord be blessed for it!) I have now in my right hand one of the marks of my sweet Spouse and Saviour, sensible to myself, though invisible to others."[1]

This beginning of her stigmatisation, which was to receive its completion five years later, caused her excruciating pain; whilst at the same time the abundance of supernatural communications which were vouchsafed to her, utterly broke down her natural powers and reduced her to a state of extreme weakness. At length, towards the close of the year, these sufferings reached their crisis. Not to speak of that terrible torture which resembled the dislocation of the bones of the breast, and which Raymund assures us *never left her*, she was enduring another kind of anguish, which they who have even partially experienced it, can in some degree comprehend. The revelation was being made to her in a sensible manner how deeply the Divine Spouse of her soul loved her, and not her alone, but all mankind. She understood, and that so clearly that it seemed to her she had never known it before, the truth expressed in those words, "God *so* loved the world as to give us His only-begotten Son, that the world by Him might be saved;"[2] and again those other words which tell us that "He

[1] This prayer of Catherine for her confessor is very commonly related, as if the confessor in question were F. Raymund. A reference to the original Legend, however, will show that this was not the case, and that the whole narrative belongs to a date much earlier than his acquaintance with her. He relates it throughout as of a third person, and says distinctly that he (the confessor) left this account in writing, from which it is evident that the father referred to was F. Thomas della Fonte.

[2] John iii. 16.

died for all."[1] A God to love us! A God to die! Truly might the Apostle say, "the charity of Christ *presseth us*." After all it was no new truth or revelation;[2] only what she had learnt from infancy in her Creed: but who does not know that there are times when old truths assume such a life and reality that they seem to be new; so that we contemplate them with amazement as though until that moment we had never understood their sense. So it was with Catherine at this moment. She doubtless exclaimed with her favourite Apostle in rapturous wonder, "He hath loved *me* and hath given Himself for *me!*"[3] And unable to bear that great excess of love, the heart of the Saint was literally broken, and the links that bound her to life snapped in twain.

It was a Sunday about the hour of tierce, and F. Bartholomew Dominic was preaching, as he tells us, in the Friars' Church, when the news was brought that Catherine was in her agony. Many of the brethren, and a great number of other persons, at once hastened to her house, and Father Thomas della Fonte, who had been summoned to assist her, went accompanied by F. Thomas Caffarini. They found her, apparently in extremity, attended by Alexia, Catherine Ghetti, and some others of the Sisters of Penance. They began with tears to recite the prayers for the dying, and as the news spread from mouth to mouth, they were soon joined by F. Bartholomew Montucci, the director of the Sisters, who brought with him a certain lay brother named John, and, as soon as the sermon was over, by Bartholomew Dominic himself. He says so great was the multitude that flocked to see her, that her chamber was full, and the street leading to her house crowded by persons going thither, so that he found no small difficulty in effecting his entrance. But before he came she had, as it seemed, expired. "Those who had been with her from the first assured me," he says, "that she drew her last breath a considerable time before I arrived." At the sad spectacle all broke forth into vehement weeping; and the sorrow of brother John in particular was so great that he ruptured a vein in his breast, thereby increasing the general consternation. But

[1] 2 Cor. v. 15. [2] Ibid. v. 14. [3] Gal. ii. 20.

F. Thomas, full of faith in the sanctity of Catherine, made him take her hand and apply it to the place, and he was at once completely cured. Then the neighbours flocking to the house began to condole with the distracted mother, and to prepare all things for the burial.

For four hours she had lain to all appearance dead, when, with a sigh, Catherine once more opened her eyes and looked around her. She was living indeed, but what had passed in that mysterious interval? Those who were with her, and who scarce ventured to believe their eyes for joy, beheld how, for three days and nights, she wept without ceasing, as though plunged in bitter sorrow, and they gathered from her words that she had been admitted into a blissful state, whence she had returned once more to recommence a life of labour and suffering. F. Bartholomew examined her as to the reality of her death, reminding her, however, that there could be no certainty on a point touching which the great Apostle professed himself ignorant. At a later period Raymund of Capua interrogated her on the same subject, pressing her to explain the facts as commonly reported. She could only answer him with her tears, but at last she exclaimed, "Oh, lamentable case, that a soul that had once been delivered out of this darksome prison and had tasted the fruition of that joyous light, should ever have been constrained to leave it and return to earth! Father," she continued, "you ask the truth from me, and it is this: The desire I felt at that time to be united to my sweet Spouse was so great that it could not be resisted, and seeing as I did by my own experience how great was the love our Saviour bore me, and what intolerable pains He suffered for my sake, I was wholly overcome with the force of such inestimable kindness, and my heart, not being able to endure the strength of so much love, brake in sunder; for which cause, my soul was delivered out of this mortal body, and had the fruition of His Divine Majesty, howbeit, alas, but for a little time. . . . I saw the pains of hell and of purgatory so great that no tongue of man is able to declare them. I saw also the bliss of heaven and the glory of my Divine Spouse, which only to think

of fills my soul with a loathing for all things that are in the world. And when I had conceived a certain hope that now I was past all pains and cares, and had come to a state of everlasting gladness, our Lord said to me, 'Daughter, seest thou these unhappy sinners and transgressors of My laws: on the one side, what joys they have lost, and on the other side, what pains they have found? For this cause have I showed these things to thee, because I will have thee return to the world to declare to My people their sins and iniquities and the great peril that hangeth over them if they will not amend.' When I heard that I should return to the world again, I was struck with a marvellous great fear and horror. Whereupon our Lord, to comfort me again, spoke thus sweetly unto me: 'Daughter, there are a great number of souls in the world which I will have to be saved through thy means; and that is the cause why I send thee thither again. Wherefore go thy way with a good will, and be of good comfort. From this time forward My will is that thou shalt change the order of thy life. Thou shalt no more keep within thy cell, but shalt go abroad into the world to win souls. Thou shalt travel, thou shalt go from city to city as I shall bid thee; thou shalt live with the multitude and speak in public; I will send some to thee, and I will send thee to others, according to My good pleasure; only be thou ready to do My will.' While our Lord spoke these words to me, of a sudden my soul was restored to the body; which when I perceived, I wept for very sorrow for three days and three nights, and never ceased. And yet to this day I cannot possibly refrain from weeping when it comes to my mind how I was deprived of that passing great joy and felicity, and sent back to this dark prison. Therefore, Father, when you and others understand what a blissful state of life I have foregone for a time (God knows how long!) and that I have resigned it by God's ordinance for the good of souls, you must not wonder if hereafter you see that I bear a passing great love to them that have cost me so dear, and that to win them to God, I alter the manner of my life, and converse more familiarly with them than I have done hitherto."

This was Catherine's own statement of what had passed in her soul during that mysterious suspension of the faculties of life. Caffarini, in the *Leggenda Minore* (Part 2, chap. vi.), examines it very precisely, and sums up his conclusions under twelve heads. 1. That Catherine's mystic death was caused by the pain she felt in contemplating the Passion of Christ and by her ardent love, and that it lasted four hours. 2. That during that space of time she beheld the joys of the blessed, and the sufferings of purgatory and hell. 3. That believing herself in the possession of eternal bliss, our Lord bade her look on the punishment due to sinners. 4. That He commanded her to return to earth for salvation of many souls. 5. That after this she felt her soul, as it were, restored to the body. 6. That for sorrow she wept three days. 7. That remembering these things she could not refrain from weeping still. 8. That these high and secret things of God cannot fitly be declared in our imperfect language. 9. That after this glimpse of eternal bliss, she longed to suffer more, knowing that it would increase her crown. 10. That she bade her confessors not marvel if henceforth she bore a great love to souls. 11. That the souls of her neighbours became her glory and her joy. 12. That from that time she ceased not to labour for their salvation. Here then was the last degree, not indeed of her spiritual life, but of her preparation for that providential mission which she was to exercise in the world for ten brief years. She had seen,—"whether in the body, or out of the body, we know not, God knoweth,"[1]—the bliss of heaven and the woe of hell. As in her childhood she had "beheld the King in His beauty, and had seen the land afar off,"[2] so now she had gazed on Him nearer, and, as it were, face to face; and almost touching the goal of her longing desires, she had turned back at His bidding, and once more opened her weary eyes on a world lying in wickedness, that by this sacrifice she might advance His kingdom on earth, and be an instrument of sanctification to countless thousands. No wonder, then, that henceforth the love of souls became her glorious passion, that their salvation stood to her in the place of

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 2. [2] Isa. xxxiii. 17.

meat and drink, that no one thing could render tolerable to her her prolonged separation from "Him whom her soul loved," save the labour of winning them to love Him also: no wonder that Catherine, to use her own words, "bore henceforth so passing great a love for them that had cost her so dear;" a love so rapturous that in its holy excess she was wont to pray, "that God would place her in the mouth of hell that she might prevent sinners from going thither."

The memory of all these marvellous graces is still religiously preserved in the church within whose walls so many of them were bestowed. A tablet affixed to the great pilaster that supports the Chapel *Delle Volte*, marks the spot where took place the mysterious exchange of hearts; another is pointed out against which she is said to have been accustomed to lean when in prayer; the very pavement of the chapel has been protected by a flooring, through an opening in which, however, you may still see the bricks so often trodden by the spouse of Christ, though of these many have been given away as precious relics to various monasteries, specially to that of St. Caterina in Magnanapoli at Rome; while all around are pictures and frescoes, on which the first artists of Siena have vied one with another in depicting the mysterious scenes which we have described. We leave to others the task of enumerating the master-pieces left here by the pencils of Salimbeni and Sodoma. But over the door of the chapel appears one sacred work of art which we cannot pass without a word of notice. It is the painted crucifix attributed to Giotto, and which, if indeed as ancient as tradition affirms, must have stood there in Catherine's time.[1] On it, day after day, her eyes must have rested in loving veneration as she passed through the door to her accustomed place of prayer. The pilgrim who comes here full of

[1] Carapelli, in his *Corso Cronotastico*, assigns Catherine's mystic death to the beginning of the year 1371. But a little attention to the narrative as it stands in the Legend shows that it cannot be separated from the events of the July and August of 1370. Moreover, we know for certain that in the December of that same year and the February of the year following, she was engaged in matters which properly belong to her active mission; so that it seems scarcely possible to fix a later date for the above event than the autumn of 1370.

her beloved memory, as he gazes on that sacred image whereon the artist has left the solemn expression of antique piety, can hardly fail to hear within his heart the echo of her oft-repeated words: "Bathe yourself in the Blood of Jesus crucified. Hide yourself in the open wound of His Side, and you will behold the secret of His Heart. There the sweet Truth will make known to you that all that He did for us He did out of love. Return Him love for love!"

CHAPTER X

Beginning of Catherine's Public Life, 1370

THE year 1370, which had proved so important an era in Catherine's spiritual life, was destined not to close before bringing her the first-fruits of those magnificent promises which had been made to her in the hour of her mysterious agony. The narrative we are about to relate is given by three different writers, by all of whom the extraordinary facts were carefully examined, while to two of them the person to whom they refer had been well known from a child, and they were present in the city when the events narrated took place.

There lived at that time in Siena a young man named Andrea di Naddino de' Bellanti, belonging to a good family, who, at the age of twenty, had already rendered himself infamous by his crimes. He was devoured by a passion for drink and gambling, and had quite given up all religious practices, being accustomed publicly to mock at those who frequented the Sacraments. He was such a notorious swearer that it was said of him that he uttered a blasphemy at every step he took; and to crown the catalogue of his misdeeds, having on one occasion lost a large sum at play, he entered a church, and seeing a picture of our Lord on the Cross, in his mad rage he deliberately and many times over stabbed it with a poniard. He is also said to have trampled on the Crucifix, and to have thrown an image of our Lady into the fire, as though to revenge himself for his ill-luck. In the month of September of this same year he fell ill, and his sickness being soon pronounced mortal, he was visited by his parish priest, who exhorted him to prepare for death by repentance and a good confession.

But Andrea, according to his usual custom, drove the good man out of the room with horrible curses. His family, distressed at his unhappy state, applied to several other pious persons, who conjured him to have pity on his soul and be reconciled to God even at the eleventh hour. But it was all in vain. He took the exhortations of his neighbours in very evil part, and would not suffer the subject of confession to be named in his presence. At last, on the 15th of December, the feast of St. Lucy, his parents bethought them of calling in Father Thomas della Fonte, the confessor of Catherine, "who," says Caffarini, "was then just beginning to appear in public." But Father Thomas succeeded no better than his predecessors in softening the heart of the miserable youth, who seemed dying in a state of utter impenitence. For three days and nights the good father never left him, and devoted himself unweariedly to the thankless task, but still with no result. At last, seeing the case was hopeless, he was returning the third evening to his convent, when passing by Catherine's house he entered, and knocking at her chamber door, found her praying and in ecstasy, as was usual with her at that time of day. Not wishing to disturb her, he told some of her companions to watch until she should return to consciousness, and then to tell her of the great danger of this poor soul on the verge, as it seemed, of a miserable eternity, and to desire her, in his name, to pray for Andrea's conversion.

It was the fifth hour of the night when Catherine returned from her ecstasy, and the Sister who was with her at once gave the message left by her confessor. No sooner had she heard the sad case and the obedience given her, than she set herself to pray with great earnestness, continuing even until the dawn of day to beseech our Lord that He would not suffer that soul to be lost which He had redeemed with His most precious Blood. But our Lord made answer, and said that the iniquity of that wicked man was so heinous in His sight, that the cry thereof pierced the heavens and called for justice, for he had not only in words most horribly blasphemed the holy name of God and of His saints, but also thrown a picture into the fire on which was painted the death

and passion of our Saviour Christ, together with the images of our Blessed Lady and other saints: by which and other like impieties he had deserved everlasting damnation. When Catherine heard that, she fell down prostrate before our Lord, and said, "O Lord, if Thou look narrowly to our iniquities, who shall be able to stand? Wherefore camest Thou down from heaven into the world? Wherefore tookest Thou flesh of the most pure and unspotted Virgin Mary? Wherefore didst Thou suffer a most bitter and reproachful death? Hast Thou done all these things, O Lord, to this end that Thou mightest call men to a strict and rigorous account for their sins, and not rather that Thou mightest utterly cancel their debts and take them to mercy? Why dost Thou, O Merciful Lord, tell me of the sins of one lost man, seeing Thou hast borne upon Thine own shoulders the sins of the whole world that none should be lost? Do I lie here prostrate at Thy feet to demand justice, and not rather to crave mercy? Do I present myself here before Thy Divine Majesty to plead the innocency of this wretched creature, and not rather to confess that he is worthy of everlasting death and damnation, and that the only refuge is to appeal to Thine endless mercy? Remember, O dear Lord, what Thou saidst to me when Thou didst first will me to go abroad, and to procure the salvation of many souls. Thou knowest right well that I have none other joy or comfort in this life but only to see the conversion of sinners unto Thee. And for this cause only I am content to lack the joyful fruition of Thy blessed presence. Wherefore, if Thou take this joy from me, what other thing shall I find in this vale of misery wherein to take pleasure or comfort? O most merciful Father and God of all comfort, reject not the humble petition of Thine handmaid; put me not away from Thee at this time; but graciously grant me that this my brother's hard heart may be softened and made to yield to the workings of Thy Holy Spirit." Thus did she continue in prayer and disputation with our Lord from the beginning of the night until the morning dawned: all which time she neither slept nor took any rest, but wept and wailed continually, out of the great compassion she had to see that soul perish; our Lord

evermore alleging His justice, and she craving for mercy. At last, our Lord being as it were overcome by her importunity and prayers, gave her this gracious answer, "Dear daughter, I can no longer resist thee in this matter. Thy tears and prayers have prevailed and wrested out of My hands the sword of justice. This sinful man shall for thy sake find such grace and favour as thou requirest for him."[1]

Meanwhile a strange scene had been passing in the chamber of the dying man. Through the long hours of that terrible night he had been unable to sleep, but as the grey light of morning dawned—at the very moment when Catherine's prayer received a favourable answer—his wife, who was watching by his side, was amazed to hear him cry aloud, saying, "Send quickly for a priest, for I will indeed confess." "How now," said his wife, "what is it you ask for?" "I ask for a priest," he said. "Look in that corner," and he pointed with his hand, "do you not see our Lord Christ who commands me to confess, *and near Him that Mantellata whom they call Catherine?*" And in truth at that moment our Lord had appeared to him, saying, "Dear child; why wilt thou not repent of thine offences against Me? Repent and confess, for behold I am ready to pardon." Which words so pierced the heart of the dying sinner that he could hold out no longer, but sending for a priest, confessed all his sins with great sentiments of contrition, made his will, and so passed out of this world with every token of God's mercy.

On the morning of the 16th of December the news ran through the city that Andrea de' Bellanti had died penitent and fortified with the last Sacraments. Men could not believe their ears, for he was known to every one in Siena for his riches and his vices. They knew that all through his illness he had been vainly urged by his friends both to confess and to make disposition of his worldly goods, which last matter he could not bear so much as to hear mentioned; but now they heard of the wise and excellent way in which he had drawn up his will and distributed his wealth, a thing no less astonishing to them than the fact that he had died

[1] Fen., Part 3, ch. xi.

as a good Christian. It was not long before the good news was carried to Father Thomas, who was stupefied with astonishment. No one knew better than he what had been Andrea's disposition the evening previous to his death; what then could have brought about so wondrous a change in the course of a few hours? As soon as he had said Mass, he determined to lose no time in ascertaining if Catherine had received his message, and hastened at once to the Fullonica. In reply to his inquiries, Catherine informed him that she had done his bidding, and had prayed for the poor sinner, who, she assured him, had obtained the Divine mercy, and having confessed his sins with true contrition, had escaped eternal perdition. "And how do you know with such certainty the particulars of his death and conversion?' asked F. Thomas. Constrained by obedience, yet not without reluctance, she related to him how the matter had come about. Amazed at what he heard, and not yet satisfied that she might not be the sport of some illusion, he questioned her more closely, "Had Andrea, then, been guilty of such atrocious misdeeds?" he asked. "Yes," replied the saint, "he was an habitual and most sacrilegious blasphemer; and over and above his other crimes he had, out of pure malice, dared to stab and trample upon the Crucifix." "And do you know at all what he was like?" continued the confessor; "if you can, describe him to me;" for he well knew that Catherine had never been to Andrea's house, nor so much as once seen or spoken to him. Then she began to describe to him the countenance and person of the dead man, the size of the room in which he died, and its rich furniture; nay, the very colour of the drapery which covered his bed, and that as exactly as if she were looking at it all with her bodily eye. "For," she said, "Our Lord deigned to show me the form and countenance of that poor man, whom before that time I had never once beheld."[1]

[1] All the additional circumstances of the narrative are given in the Processus by F. Bartholomew of Siena, and by F. Thomas Caffarini, and also by the latter in his Supplement (Part 2, Trat. 2, § 8). It must be remembered

This wonderful conversion became noised throughout Siena, where Andrea was universally known. It created a great sensation, and impressed on those who heard it unbounded confidence in Catherine's power with God, and her special readiness to exert it on behalf of souls. And this impression was confirmed by another extraordinary incident which happened a few weeks later. One day in the February of 1371, when Catherine was again staying in the house of Alexia, it chanced that two famous criminals condemned to death were carried in a cart through the street towards the place of execution.[1] "Their sentence was, that by the way as they were carried, they should be pinched, now in one part of the body and now in another, with hot irons or pincers, and so in the end put to death. Which pain was so intolerable that they (who were before in a desperate state, and might by no persuasions be brought to repent them of their manifold offences) blasphemed God and all His saints, insomuch that it seemed that the temporal torments that they were now enduring were but a beginning and way to everlasting torments. But our merciful Lord, whose provident goodness disposeth all things sweetly, had otherwise determined

that both these witnesses were in Siena at the time, and Caffarini, as he says, "had known Andrea from his cradle." F. Raymund, on the other hand, wrote from hearsay, not having been acquainted with Catherine till some years later. In the Supplement, however, Caffarini gives the date 1367; and we should have accepted it in preference to that of 1370, assigned by Raymund, but for the irrefragable authority of the Necrology of San Domenico, in which occurs the following entry: 1370, *Andreas Naddini mortuus est die decimasesta Decembris et sepultus ad pedes scalarum claustri in Sepulcro suorum* In the MS. of the Processus preserved at Siena occurs a marginal note in contemporary writing, which runs as follows: *Andrea di Naddino Bellanti, un singolare ribaldo. Al padre suo gli fu tagliato il capo.* (An extraordinary rascal, his father had his head cut off.)

[1] In the Chronicle of Agnolo di Tura (*Rer. Ital. Script.*, tom. xv. p. 220) we find the following entry:

"1371. *Uno trattata fu scoperto in Siena a di* 26 *di Gennajo e funne premiati quattro che lo scupersero, e fu lo dato l'arme. E poi a di* 8 *di Ferraio, furono attanagliati due in sur uno carro, per lo Senatore di Siena.*" There can be little doubt that these were the two criminals on whose piteous sufferings Catherine that day gazed.

for them. When they were come near to the house, Alexia, hearing a great concourse and noise of people in the street, went to the window to see what it might be, and seeing the horrible manner of the execution, she ran in again and said to the holy maid: "O mother! if ever you will see a pitiful sight, come now." At these words, Catherine went to the window and looked out, but as soon as she had seen the manner of the execution, she returned forthwith to her prayers again; for, as she declared afterwards to her confessor, she saw a great multitude of wicked spirits about those felons, who burnt their souls more cruelly within than the tormentors did their bodies without, which lamentable sight moved her to double compassion. She felt great pity to see their bodies, but much more to see their souls; so that, turning herself to our Lord, with great fervour of spirit, she made her prayer to Him after this manner: "Ah! dear Lord, wherefore dost Thou suffer these Thy creatures, made to Thine own image and likeness, and redeemed with the price of Thy most precious Blood, to be thus led away in triumph by the cruel enemy? I know, O Lord, and confess that these men are justly punished according to the measure of their offences. So was the thief also that hung by Thee on the Cross, whom, notwithstanding, Thou tookest to mercy, saying that he should be with Thee that very day in Paradise. Thou didst not refuse Peter, but gavest him a friendly and comfortable look, though he like an unkind man had thrice refused and denied Thee. Thou drewest Mary Magdalen to Thee with the cords of love when she had estranged herself from Thee by her manifold sins. Thou tookest Matthew the publican from a sinful trade of life in the world, to be an apostle and evangelist. Thou didst not refuse the woman of Canaan, nor Zaccheus the prince of publicans, but didst most sweetly accept the one and invite the other. Wherefore I most humbly beseech Thee, for all Thy mercies hitherto showed unto man, and also for all those also that Thine infinite goodness hath determined to show hereafter, that Thou wilt vouchsafe to look down upon these wretched creatures, and soften their hearts with the fire of Thy Holy Spirit, that they may be delivered from

the second death." Our Lord heard the prayer of His spouse, and granted her such a grace, that she went in spirit with those two thieves towards the place of execution, weeping and lamenting for their sins, and moving them to repentance. Which thing the wicked spirits perceived well enough, and therefore they cried out upon her, and said: "Catherine, leave off to trouble us. If thou wilt not, we will surely enter into thee and vex thee." To whom the holy maid made answer: "As God wills, so will I. And therefore I will not cease to do what lieth in me for the relief of these poor wretches, because I know it is the will of God that I should so do." And so continuing her prayer, she procured them a singular grace and favour, as the effect declared, for when those thieves were come to the gate of the city, our Saviour Christ appeared to them, showing to them His precious wounds all streaming down with blood, and inviting them to repent of their former life, which if they did, He assured them that all was quite forgiven. At this strange sight their hearts were suddenly so altered, to the great wonder of as many as were present, that they turned their blasphemy into thanksgiving, and showing themselves to be heartily sorry and contrite for their sins, desired earnestly that they might have a priest to hear their confessions. That done, they went forward cheerfully towards the place of execution, where they showed likewise great tokens of joy and comfort, for that they had to pass by a reproachful death to a glorious life. All the people saw this strange alteration, and were much astonished at it, because they understood not then the cause thereof, which afterwards came to light in this way: The priest that heard the felons' confession went soon afterwards to visit F. Thomas, and in talk declared unto him how wonderfully God had wrought with them. F. Thomas began forthwith to suspect the truth, and asked Alexia what Catherine was doing at that time when the thieves were led through their street towards the place of execution. She declared the whole process of the matter, as she had seen and heard it in her own house, whereby F. Thomas saw a very great likelihood that the thing had been wrought, as he had supposed, by the prayer and interces-

sion of the saint. However, for more assurance he took an occasion afterwards to ask the holy maid herself. And she, to the honour of God and for the satisfaction of her confessor, declared unto him particularly how everything had passed. Within a few days after this was done, certain of the Sisters that were present while Catherine was praying, heard her say these words in her prayer: "O Lord Jesu, I most heartily thank Thee that Thou hast delivered them out of the second prison." And being afterwards asked the meaning of these words, she answered that the souls of those culprits were then delivered out of purgatory, and taken to paradise. For, having by her charity delivered them from the everlasting torments of hell, she never ceased to pray for them until she saw that they were also passed the temporal pains of purgatory and received into everlasting bliss."[1]

We have now to speak of one of Catherine's supernatural gifts of a kind differing from any yet referred to. Her power over evil spirits formed one of her special prerogatives, and is singled out for notice in the collect of her Office. Between her and the great enemy of souls there was an unintermitting war. She was ever robbing him of his victims, and in revenge he ceased not his efforts to vex and torment her. Though never permitted after her one sublime victory, in which she had mastered his assaults, again to disturb her soul, yet he was continually directing his attacks against her body. Sometimes she was raised in the air and cast into the fire, at other times when travelling on some errand of mercy she would be hurled from her horse with great violence.

[1] In their version of the above narrative, F. Ambrogio and his English translator have fallen into the error of supposing Catherine's confessor herein alluded to, to be none other than Raymund of Capua. A reference to the story, however, as he himself relates it in his Legend, will show the mistake. He says expressly, "The priest who accompanied these criminals gave these details to *Father Thomas, Catherine's confessor*. Later, I also received from Catherine, in confidence, the particulars of what took place, and found them in every circumstance *conformable to what Father Thomas had written*."—Leg., Part 2, ch. vi. And in fact if, as we suppose, the incident took place in 1371, this was before the coming of Raymund to Siena.

On one such occasion when Raymund and others of the brethren were present, both she and her horse, without any seeming cause, were cast down a steep precipice. But she arose unhurt and smiling, and dispelled their alarm, saying, "Take no heed, it is only the work of Malatasca," the name she commonly applied to the evil one.

The mastery which she wielded over the unclean spirits becoming known, Catherine was constantly receiving applications from the friends of possessed persons to come to their relief; but however disposed to help her neighbours in other kinds of suffering, her humility shrank from being required to exercise this power; she evaded such requests whenever she could, and it needed no little adroitness to obtain her assistance.

One story of a deliverance wrought through her means we will quote from the English Legend. There was in Siena a certain notary, named Ser Michel di Monaldi; he was a pious worthy man, and had resolved to dedicate his two daughters to the service of God in the Convent of St. John the Baptist. The nuns of this convent were Augustinians, and occupied themselves in the education of young girls. Monaldi was a benefactor to their community, to whom he acted as a sort of temporal father, and the two children were therefore gladly received by the nuns, to be educated by them until such time as they might be old enough to take the religious habit. "But they had not been long in the convent when one of them, whose name was Laurentia (a child of eight years old), was, by the secret judgment of God, possessed with a wicked spirit. The whole monastery was much disquieted, and by common consent they sent for her father, and bade him take back his daughter. After the child was thus taken out of the monastery the wicked spirit uttered many wonderful things by her mouth, and answered to many dark and hard questions. And (which was most strange) he spoke commonly in the Latin tongue. He disclosed also many secret vices of divers and sundry persons, to their great reproach and slander. The father and mother, and others of their kindred, being much afflicted, left no means unsought for the relief of the child. Among other

things wherein they hoped to find help and comfort, was the relics of saints kept in many places in the city, to which they resorted daily with all diligence, and among others to the tomb of B. Ambrose of Siena, who had been in his lifetime a Friar Preacher, and to whom Almighty God had granted a singular grace in casting out devils, so that his mantle or scapular being laid upon those that were vexed with unclean spirits very commonly chased them away. They brought the child, therefore, and laid her down upon the tomb, and placed these relics over her; the father and mother in the meantime earnestly praying our Lord by the intercession of that holy saint to take mercy on their child. But their prayer was not then heard, which happened not for any sin that they had committed, but because it was otherwise disposed by the provident wisdom of God, who put in the hearts of certain of their friends to counsel that they should repair to the holy maid for the release of their child. Sending to her, therefore, they prayed her in most earnest manner that she would do her best to help their daughter; to which she made answer that she had enough to do with the wicked spirits that from time to time molested herself, and therefore prayed them that they would hold her excused. The parents, whose hearts were very heavy for their innocent child, would not take that excuse, but took their daughter, and went with her to Catherine's lodging, and came to the house so suddenly that she could not possibly escape by the door without their getting a sight of her. Which when she saw, she found means to convey herself out by a window, and so hid herself for that time that they could not find her. At last, when they had tried all ways, and saw that they could by no means come to her speech (for she had given charge to as many as were about her that none should move her in that matter), they resolved to go to Father Thomas, her confessor, and to entreat him that he would command her in virtue of her obedience to keep the child with her for a time. Father Thomas was much moved with their pitiful suit, and therefore assured them that he would do his best. But because he knew well that if he spoke to her himself she

would of humility make one excuse or other, so that he should not be able to move her any further, he devised this stratagem. He waited a time late in the evening when he knew that she was abroad, and then took the child that was possessed and put her into Catherine's chamber, whither he knew she would come that night, leaving word with the rest of the Sisters that they should tell her when she came home that he commanded her, in virtue of obedience, to suffer that child to remain with her all that night until the next morning. And so he went his way, and left the child with them. When she came home and found the child in her chamber, she asked the Sisters who had brought her thither. They said that Father Thomas, her confessor, had left the child there; and declared, moreover, that he desired her, in virtue of obedience, to take charge of the child till the next day. When she heard that she made no more resistance, but set herself at once to prayer, and caused the child to kneel down and pray with her. And so they continued together all that night, fighting against the wicked spirit, until at length, a little before day, he was constrained by the force of her faithful prayer to depart, and to leave the innocent child without doing any harm to her body. Which, when one of her Sisters, called Alexia, perceived, she ran to Father Thomas and told him that the child was delivered. He, likewise, being very glad of the joyful news, went to the father and mother, and brought them with him to Catherine's chamber, where, when they saw the child delivered indeed, they wept for joy, and glorified Almighty God that had given such power to His humble spouse. But the holy maid knew that the wicked spirit had not quite forsaken the child, and therefore entreated the father and mother that she might remain there with her a little time, which they willingly granted. She then began to instruct the child, and exhorted her to give herself to continual prayer. And she charged her that she should in nowise depart out of the house until her father and mother came thither again to fetch her home, which points the child carefully observed. Meantime, as the holy maid had occasion to go home to her own house about some necessary business (for all this was done not in

her own house, but in the house of Alexia), she left the child with a servant, and gave her charge to have a care of her. When she had passed the whole day in her own house about necessary business, and night was come, she desired Alexia to give her her mantle, for she would return with her to her house. To that Alexia answered that it was very late, and that it would be evil thought of if women (especially religious persons) should be seen abroad at that time of night. 'O Alexia,' said she, 'we must needs go, for that wicked wolf is about to take my little lamb away from me again.' And with that they went both together, and found the child indeed strangely altered, her face all red and her wits utterly distracted. When the holy maid saw that, she exclaimed in holy indignation: 'Ah! thou foul fiend of hell, how durst thou thus to enter again this poor innocent? I trust in the goodness of my dear Lord and Saviour that thou shalt now be cast out in such sort that thou shalt never dare to enter any more.' And with that she took the child into her chamber, where she continued for a certain time in prayer. But the wicked spirit was so obstinate that she was fain to persevere even until the fourth hour of the night before she could expel him. At last, constrained by the force of her prayer and by virtue of the charge that she gave him in God's behalf, he said these words to her: 'If I must needs depart out of the child, I will enter into thee.' Whereunto she made answer and said, 'If it be God's pleasure (without Whose licence I am well assured thou canst do nothing), our Lord forbid that I should be against His holy will in anything.' Which words, proceeding from a humble and resigned spirit, so struck the proud fiend that he lost all the strength that he had before against the innocent child. Howbeit, in passing out he rested awhile in the child's throat, which was perceived by a great swelling that he made in that place, which the holy maid seeing, she made the sign of the cross over the child's throat, by virtue whereof the wicked spirit was thoroughly dispossessed in such sort that he might never return to disquiet the child again. And the next day she sent for the father and mother, to whom she said, 'Take your child home with you, in God's name, for

from this day forward she shall never be troubled more with that wicked spirit.' They took their child with glad hearts, and led her to the monastery whence she came, where she lived a very blessed life under that rule and discipline, and was never molested more to her dying day. Which thing was so joyous to Ser Michel, her father, that he could never tell it afterwards but that he wept for joy. And he honoured the holy maid in his heart as if she had been an angel of God."

It may easily be understood that facts of this kind, when once known, could not fail to bring Catherine's name before the notice of her fellow-citizens. "People began to resort to her," says F. Bartholomew Dominic, "more than they had done before, coming even from distant parts of the country to see and speak with her." In short her public life may be said to have fairly begun. She came to be regarded as one to whom recourse might be had in desperate cases, and whose prayers were never known to be left unanswered. One of the first who was moved by these reports to seek her out and ask her counsel, was Donna Onorabile Tolomei, wife to Francesco Tolomei, the head of the noblest family of Siena, one which boasts of having given a long line of illustrious citizens to the republic, and no fewer than fourteen saints to the Order of St. Dominic. Onorabile, or Rabes, as she was commonly called, was a virtuous and religious matron, though not without plenty of family pride and a certain infirmity of temper. Her tale of sorrow was soon told. She was the mother of several sons and of two daughters, all of them given up to the vanities of the world. Giacomo, or James, the eldest son, led a life of ferocious crime. Whilst yet a child he had killed two men with his own hand, and such was his pride and cruelty, that though still a mere youth he was feared by all men. He had two sisters, one named Ghinoccia, and the other Francesca; Ghinoccia in particular was passionately addicted to the world and its pleasures, and carried her love of dress to an extremity of folly, filling the house with her perfumes and cosmetics. Rabes feared for the souls of her children, and specially of her daughters, whose giddiness and

levity seemed even to threaten the loss of their good name. And inasmuch as she herself feared God, and desired nothing so much as the conversion of her children to a better life, she conjured the Saint to come with her to her house and see these young girls and give them some pious exhortation. It was probably the first time that Catherine had ever set her foot within one of the great houses of Siena. The Tolomei Palace still stands, a venerable building, ancient even in Catherine's time, and bearing in every part the tokens of belonging to the proudest family of the republic. Rabes introduced her to her two daughters, and then left them together. One little phrase which occurs in the narrative, as it is told by Caffarini in the *Leggenda Minore*, suggests a fact which possibly moved the heart of the Saint as she gazed on those young faces to a deep and singular interest. Does the reader remember that compliance with a foolish fashion in her early childhood (the dyeing of her hair to a fictitious appearance of fairness), which all through Catherine's innocent life weighed upon her conscience, and which she even regarded as a deadly sin? As she looked on the two maidens now before her, she beheld the revival of that same fashion. Dressed in the extravagant modes of the fourteenth century (and few centuries could boast of extravagances more preposterous), the raven hair of the two Italian girls was pomaded and powdered in the vain attempt to make them appear like English blondes. Catherine, as she looked at them, silently raised her heart to God, and that done, addressed them a few words of gentle remonstrance. It did not take many minutes for her to win their hearts and touch their consciences; her words, but far more her presence and the sweet odour of that perfect charity, tore away the veil from before their eyes, and wrought in them a change which was in truth "a change of the right hand of the Most High." Detesting the vanities which until then they had clung to, they cast all their cosmetics into the gutter, says Caffarini, and cutting off their (artificially) fair hair (*tagliati e' loro biondi capegli*), they placed themselves at the disposal of Catherine, and declared themselves ready to begin an

entirely new life. It was one of those conversions in which souls cannot stop half way; and before many days were over, Ghinoccia and Francesca had asked and received the habit of the Sisters of Penance. Ghinoccia, in particular, who had formerly been the most given to worldly excess, was now the one most disposed to the practice of penance, and both embraced a rule of life as austere as it was edifying.

While all this had been going on, James, their eldest brother, had been away from Siena. When he learnt the change that had come over his sisters, he raged like a madman, and cursed all those who had had any part in it: the friars, the sisters, and Catherine above all, and ended by swearing he would tear from their backs the religious habit which they had had the folly to assume. Rabes, who knew her son's violence, and dreaded what he might be capable of doing, sent a private message to Catherine, to warn her of the gathering storm. The Saint contented herself with requesting F. Thomas to go and talk to the youth, saying, "You may say such and such things to him from me, and I on my part will pray for him to God."

There was a younger member of the family, named Matthew, who at this juncture was the only one who had the courage to face his ferocious brother. "Brother James," he said, "you do not know this Sister Catherine. She is a wonderful woman. If once she sees you, she will turn you also and make you go to confession." "To confession!" he exclaimed, "I defy her and all of them; you may be sure of this, I will cut the throats of all those priests and friars before they bring me to confession." "Well, brother," replied the boy, "you will see my words will come true; and that holy Sister will bring you to the grace of God." James replied only by fresh curses, and on reaching Siena, went at once to his father's house, where he threatened all manner of horrible revenge, if his sisters, and Ghinoccia in particular, were not made to lay aside the religious habit. Rabes, who knew his violent nature, did what she could to calm him, and succeeded so far as to get him to harm no one that night. The next morning she sent for F. Thomas, who came in company with F.

Bartholomew of Siena; and both spent several hours endeavouring to make him hear reason, but in vain. All this time Catherine was in prayer, and as the event showed, her prayers prevailed where the eloquence of the good fathers was of no effect. For when they had done their utmost and saw that they gained nothing, they were about to take their leave, when suddenly, and contrary to all expectation, the young man, as if touched by the hand of God, began saying of his own accord that he was well content to leave his sisters to serve God in the holy rule which they had chosen. The friars could not believe their ears, but their astonishment increased when James went on to say that he desired to be confessed and absolved from his sins, that he might serve God with them. In fact, he made his confession that same day, and the raging wolf was now as gentle as a lamb. Rabes and all her family rejoiced at the unaccountable change, whilst F. Thomas and his companion hastened to Catherine's house that they might bring her the good news. They found that she was in an upper chamber absorbed in prayer, and so were obliged to remain until she was able to see them. But one of her Sisters coming in to entertain them meanwhile, F. Thomas began to relate what had taken place. "It is no news to us," replied the Sister. "Catherine, from whom I have just come, has told me the whole matter.' Then they all went up together to the Saint's chamber, who received them very courteously, and before they had had time to speak, expressed her joy at the conversion of Master James. "We are indeed bound to thank God," she said, "the wicked enemy thought to have got a little lamb of which he had some hope, but through the unspeakable mercy of God he lost a great prey of which he had full possession. He laid a snare for Ghinoccia, but he has lost James. May our Lord be blessed who turns all things to the comfort of His servants." Ghinoccia and Francesca persevered in the holy life they had embraced, and died a few years later in great repute of sanctity. James married, and became another man, showing so good and exemplary an example as to be the admiration of his neighbours. Towards the end of his life he put on the habit of a Dominican Tertiary and died in

1406. Matthew, as we shall see, became in time a Friar Preacher and one of the faithful disciples of our Saint.

It is not to be doubted that the connection thus formed between Catherine and the members of the Tolomei family must have brought her into relation with many other noble houses, and that by this means she became more fully cognisant of the troubles which invested nōt Siena only but all Italy.. Her circle of friends was, moreover, becoming enlarged in another way. In a former chapter we have spoken of the heroic services she was in the habit of rendering to the sick, and of her visits to the Leper Hospital. There were other hospitals in Siena which she was wont to frequent; one was the *Casa della Misericordia*,[1] whose rector was one Master Matthew di Cenni di Fazio; the other was the great hospital of La Scala. Matthew was a man of noble birth, who in his youth had led a dissolute life, but who, together with his friend, Francis Lando, was won over to better things through the means of a certain Father William Flete, an English Augustinian hermit. At the time of which we speak, Master Matthew was one of the notabilities of Siena, known to everybody, and everybody's friend; for his genial sympathetic nature won him the confidence of young and old. Between him and Catherine an intimate friendship soon sprang up, and lasted till her death. At La Scala also she came in contact with a group of excellent men who may be said to have made up the pious society of Siena. This noble hospital, which still exists, boasts of being one of the most ancient charitable institutions in Europe. It was founded in 832 by a poor shoemaker, and takes its name from three marble steps which were discovered when digging out the foundation, and which are supposed to have belonged to an old temple of Diana. Hence it was called "The Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala." Here Catherine often came, and a little room was assigned to her use. A stone is still shown on which she is said to have lain down to rest, and above it is the inscription: "*Here lay the spouse of*

[1] The *Misericordia* was founded in 1250 by B. Andrew Gallerani, called the first Tertiary of St. Dominic. A descendant of his, Louis Gallerani, was one of St. Catherine's disciples.

Jesus Christ, the Seraphic Mother, St. Catherine of Siena. Laus Deo!" whilst among the relics of the Fullonica is the lanthorn she carried with her when called forth on some errand of charity during the night. Caffarini in his Supplement speaks of her habit of attending the sick in the hospitals, and specially notes the fact of her serving them at night, which explains why she may have required the use of a little room in which to rest. "Whenever there was question of serving God or performing any works of charity," he says, "she readily quitted her cell to employ herself for the good of her neighbours, as our Lord commanded her after her three years of retirement. She was not afraid of serving the sick in the hospitals, even at the most fatiguing hours of the night; nor did she shrink from those miserable creatures who were suffering from the most repulsive maladies. She once bestowed her whole care on an unhappy woman who for years had lived an abandoned life, and who now lay dying on a wretched bed, where she complained that she could find no one to assist her, or give her the kind of food she liked. Catherine resolved to take care first of the body and then of the soul of this poor creature. She prepared her the necessary food, and waited on her day and night, while at the same time she encouraged her to repent and have confidence in God's mercy."[1] But La Scala, besides being an hospital, was the rendezvous of a certain Confraternity which assembled in some subterranean vaults or catacombs, and was known by the name of "*The Company of the Disciples of the Virgin Mary, under the Hospital.*" This company was far more ancient than the hospital itself, and traced its origin to those first Christians of Siena who, converted to the faith by the martyr St. Ansano, assembled in these catacombs for the secret exercise of their religion. When the great hospital was built at a later period, the vaults were not destroyed, but included in the fabric and still assigned to the use of the company. Here the brethren had their own chapel and rooms in which they assembled and took the discipline.

They met on all festivals, and on every Friday in the year made

[1] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 3, § 6.

a long meditation, heard Mass, and approached the sacraments. Besides this they carried on a great number of good works, attending the hospitals both in and out of the city, and assisting the poor, the sick, orphans, and pilgrims, from their large revenues. This Confraternity was the very life and centre of the piety of Siena. It numbered among its associates a noble army of saints and saintly personages, and in St. Catherine's time we find in the Catalogue of the Brethren, the names of F. Raymund of Capua, F. Thomas della Fonte, F. Thomas Caffarini, F. Bartholomew of Siena, F. Bartholomew Montucci, Gabriel Piccolomini, Stephen Maconi, and the two Augustinians, F. John Tantucci, and F. William Flete, to which must be added that of Don John of the Cells of Vallombrosa; all in due time to be numbered among Catherine's friends and disciples. By all the members of this holy company Catherine was regarded with affectionate reverence, and accepted rather as a mother than as an associate; and when they assembled on festival days to sing the divine office in their chapel, Catherine would assist and share their devotions in the privacy of her little chamber. A fresco may still be seen at Siena, which represents St. Catherine with her mantle extended, whilst under its folds kneel four of her disciples, clad in the penitential garb of the Company of Mary.

Here, then, we probably see the first beginnings of that Spiritual Family which gradually gathered round the Saint, and which little by little drew into itself all those souls of predilection, who in a sad and evil day preserved in Siena and the other cities of Tuscany "the sweet savour of Christ." Whether seculars or religious, men or women, Dominicans or members of other religious orders, they all called her mother, and stood to her in the relation of spiritual children. It mattered little that she who was looked up to as their head was at this time but twenty-four years of age; of her, if of any one, it might be truly said, that, "Venerable age is not that of long time nor counted by the number of years, but the understanding is grey hairs, and a spotless life old age."[1] Her very confessors regarded themselves

[1] Wisd. iv. 8, 9.

in no other light than her "sons," and whilst she rendered them the most implicit obedience in the discharge of their sacred office, it is impossible not to see that they were no less her disciples than the others. "People often said," writes F. Raymund, "that it was from the friars she learnt her wonderful doctrine, but the contrary was the case; it was they who learnt from her." And as the circle widened and extended, it came about necessarily and naturally that Catherine often had to communicate with those who sought her advice and direction at a distance. Hence the origin of that marvellous correspondence of which we possess but very imperfect fragments, but which, incomplete as it is, furnishes us with by far the most precious materials for forming a knowledge of her real character. As she herself did not as yet possess the art of writing, she was dependent on the assistance of others, to whom she dictated her letters with wonderful ease and fluency. Nor is it possible to doubt the originality of these compositions; on every page, in every word there is impressed the mind and heart of Catherine, wonderful in variety, adapting itself to the rank, the circumstances, the spiritual needs of each one whom she addresses; now burning with zeal, now melting with tenderness, supplying a body of spiritual direction of which the distinguishing feature is practical good sense, and a course of meditations, in which she is content to build up the faith of her disciples on the Eternal Truths.

Before going further in the course of our history, therefore, it will best answer the purpose we have in view if we pause for a brief space, and introduce to the reader a little more particularly the Spiritual Family of St. Catherine, confining ourselves, for the sake of brevity, to those most closely associated with her, and whose names will most frequently recur in the following pages.

CHAPTER XI

Catherine's Spiritual Family

AND first, we will say a few words of those who may most properly be called St. Catherine's companions, the members, namely, of that religious body to which she belonged, the Mantellate, or Dominican Sisters of Penance. From the time she quitted the solitude of her cell, it had been her custom always to have one or other of them in her company. Of Alexia we have already said something, and she will often reappear in the course of our narrative. Catherine, as has been seen, loved her dearly, and on that account she did not spare her. From various little words that are dropped in her letters, it would seem that at the period of their first acquaintance, the Saint considered her friend a little open to that feminine weakness, an unguarded tongue. "Make a tabernacle in your cell," she says, "so as not to be going about everywhere gossiping; only go out when called by necessity, or charity, or obedience to our Prioress. . . . Watch the movements of your tongue, and do not let it always follow those of your thoughts; regulate your time well, watch at night, after you have slept as much as you require, and in the morning go to church before occupying yourself in frivolous things. Do not change your rule of life too often; after dinner take a little time for recollection, and then occupy yourself in some manual work. At vesper time go where the Holy Spirit may call you, but be sure you return and take care of your old mother, and see she has all she requires, for that is your plain duty. From this time until I return, try to do as I say." Alexia often succeeded in getting Catherine to take up her abode for some time

together in her house,[1] and on one occasion the Saint spent an entire winter with her. The way it came about was this. Alexia's father-in-law, Francesco, an old man above eighty, was still living, and made his home under her roof. For years he had neglected his religious duties, and resisted every effort which his daughter-in-law made to put the affairs of his soul in better order. At last she bethought her that if she could secure that Catherine should come and stay with her for some months, her conversation during the long winter evenings might produce the desired result. The Saint consented, but owned that the task was a difficult one. At last, however, the hard heart was touched, and he said: "I am determined to confess, but first of all I must tell you, that I entertain such a hatred against the prior of a certain church that I daily seek means of killing him." But Catherine said such moving things to him on the subject that he finished by exclaiming, "I am ready to do whatever you order me; you need only speak." So she said to him, "I wish that for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in order that He may pardon you, you should forgive the prior and be reconciled with him." He promised, and on the morrow, at dawn of day, he took a falcon of which he was very fond, and went alone to the church where the prior lived. The latter immediately fled; but the old man charged a canon to go and tell him that he did not come to injure him, but on the contrary, to bring him good news. The prior learning that he was alone and unarmed, first caused several persons to come into his apartment and then permitted his visitor to be introduced; who bowed to him and said, "The grace of God has touched my heart, and I am come to offer to be reconciled with you; and to prove that I am sincere, I entreat you to accept this falcon, of which I am extremely fond." Peace was soon concluded, and the old man returned to Catherine. "I

[1] Where was this house? Some writers suppose Alexia to have occupied a portion of the Saraceni Palace during the lifetime of her father-in-law. It stands in the Via del Casato di Sotto, not far from the Piazza del Campo. It was possibly from the windows of this palace that Catherine beheld the criminals on their way to execution.

have obeyed your orders," said he, "and I will obey you again." The Saint told him to go and confess to Father Bartholomew. His general confession occupied three days, and when he had received absolution, his confessor was at a loss what penance to assign him, because he was very aged, and although noble was poor. So he gave him a trifling penance, and said, "Return to her who sent you, and what she gives you, I give also." Catherine bade him rise every morning at dawn for a certain period, and go in silence to the cathedral, reciting each time a hundred Paters and Aves, and gave him a cord with a hundred knots on which to reckon them. He accomplished the whole with fidelity, and after a few years spent in the exercise of religion and charity, made a peaceful end.

This story must not be confounded with that of the conversion of another of Alexia's relations, Nicolas Saraceni. This old knight resisting all his wife's exhortations that he would attend to the affairs of his soul, she came as a last resource to Catherine and asked her prayers. Catherine promised not to forget him; and soon after appeared to Nicolas in his sleep, and desired him to give heed to his wife's counsel. Awaking in terror, he told the latter what had happened, and promised to go and talk with the holy virgin, who had no difficulty in sending him to confession. When he came from the church, she inquired if he had confessed all his sins. "Yes," he replied, "all that I could remember." On which she reminded him of one thing that had happened many years before in Apulia, which was known to no living man and which he himself had forgotten. Filled with wonder he owned it to be true, and having finished his confession according to her direction, he was accustomed to tell the story to her honour, and say in the words of the Gospel, "Come and see one who told me all things that I have done: is not this a prophetess?"[1]

Another of the Sisters was Cecca, or Francesca, the widow of

[1] On the margin of the MS. of the *Leggenda Minore* (translated by Stephen Maconi) is written this note: "I, brother Stephen, was not only familiarly acquainted with this Master Nicolas, but his wife was my near relation."

Clement Gori, of whom Raymund often speaks in the Legend, calling her Francesca of Gori. Her husband was of noble birth, and her three sons were Dominican Friars. They all died holy deaths before her, and as it would seem in the service of the plague-stricken. Her daughter Justina was a nun at Montepulciano. Alexia and Cecca frequently acted as Catherine's secretaries, and when they had finished writing what she dictated, they generally added some little message of their own, by which we are able to identify the writers. They were on specially familiar terms with F. Bartholomew Dominic of Siena, who held among them the place of a brother. So in the letters addressed to him on occasion of his frequent absences, there is often a playful and affectionate word from *Alexia grassotta*, or *Cecca pazza*. In one letter we read, "Alexia recommends herself to you a thousand times; she is astonished at not hearing from you. May God bring us where we shall all meet face to face!" And Alexia, who is acting as the scribe, adds from herself, "Alexia the negligent would very much like to put herself into this letter, that she might be able to pay you a visit." Of Lisa Colombini, Catherine's sister-in-law, we have elsewhere spoken. Through her, no doubt, it was that Catherine became so well known, both to other members of the Colombini family, and to those numerous Gesuati whom we learn from the Processus were to be found among her disciples. St. John Colombini, Lisa, Matthew, and the blessed Catherine Colombini were all four first-cousins, being children of four brothers. B. Catherine, who had been first converted to a holy life by the exhortation of St. John, her cousin, had a great love and devotion to our Saint, with whom she was on terms of intimate friendship. As she lay on her deathbed, we read that there appeared to her St. John Colombini, and St. Catherine of Siena, and recognising them with immense joy, she exclaimed, "O Blessed Catherine: O John, father of my soul, my sweetest patrons, I am coming to you!" and so expired.[1] Lisa had also a brother, who seems also to have been one of the Saint's disciples. In the same letter quoted above she says, "I send you this letter

[1] Fasti Senensi.

by the brother of her who is my sister-in-law[1] according to the flesh, but my sister in Christ." Of the other Mantellate, it will suffice to mention Giovanna Pazzi, a member of a branch of the noble Florentine family of that name, Jane di Capo, and a certain Catherine of the Hospital. It may illustrate the familiar and pleasant terms which existed among all these good Sisters, when we say that they not only gave each other nicknames, a habit from which no Italian could perhaps abstain, but at times were guilty of something very like a pun, so that Giovanna's family name is occasionally transformed from Giovanna *Pazzi* to Giovanna *pazza*, that is, mad or foolish Jane.

From the sisters let us now turn to the brethren of this happy society, three of whom have already been frequently mentioned. And first we must glance at the holy, though unlearned F. Thomas della Fonte, who acted as Catherine's chief confidant and director from her childhood until the year 1374, when in his simple humility he resigned his charge into the hands of Raymund of Capua, making over to his keeping all the notes which during fifteen years he had kept regarding his holy penitent. They filled four closely-written quires, and are among the chief materials from which Raymund afterwards composed the Legend; but with the exception of a few pages which have been embodied in the *Leggenda Minore*, no fragment of the original work has been preserved.[2] F. Thomas Antonio de Nacci Caffarini was, next to him, the oldest of Catherine's Dominican friends. Unlike his namesake he was a man of considerable learning, and seems to have assisted the Saint in her studies of the Sacred Scriptures. So we gather from one of his letters addressed to Catherine which has been preserved, and in which he replies to her inquiries as to the right reading of the 130th Psalm.[3] For ten

[1] *Mia cognata secondo la carne, mia sorella secondo Christo*, Letter 209. M. Cartier has a mistranslation of this passage, rendering *cognata* as *cousine;* but Lisa was not cousin, but sister-in-law to Catherine as the word really means.

[2] According to Echard and Quetif (Script. Ord. Præd., tom. I. 696), this work bore the title of *Singularia et mira Sanctæ Catherinæ Senensis.*

[3] *Lettere dei discepoli di S. Cath.*, No. 1.

continuous years he enjoyed her society and confidence, and during that time often acted as her confessor. Hence he became acquainted with many secrets of her interior life, which he has preserved in the Supplement to the Legend, so often quoted in the foregoing pages. But the one who has left us the most life-like portrait of the holy virgin is undoubtedly Father Bartholomew Dominic, or, as he is commonly called, Bartholomew of Siena. He also frequently acted as her confessor, and seems to have lost no opportunity of searching and examining her spirit. Sometimes when she bitterly reproached herself with faults which none but her own eyes could detect, or charged herself with being the cause of all the evils that happened in the world, he either was, or feigned himself to be, incredulous of her sincerity. "How can you say such things sincerely," he asked, "when it is plain you have a great horror of sin?" "Ah, father," she would sorrowfully reply, "I see you do not know my misery. The most contemptible wretch on earth that had received the graces I have received would be on fire with the love of God. She would spread such fervour abroad by her words and example that men would everywhere leave off sinning. But I who have received so much, I am only a cause of ruin to those whom I ought to save, and so I am doubtless most guilty before God." He testifies to her wonderful love of suffering, and describes her as fastened to the Cross by three distinct kinds of torture, in her head, breast, and side. Yet never could he detect a shade of melancholy on her placid and smiling countenance, and if others pitied her she would not merely be cheerful, but gay. He also testifies to her wonderful prophetic spirit. Father Thomas della Fonte and he determined one day they would put her to the test on this point. Going together to her chamber, therefore, they desired her to tell them what they had been doing at two and three o'clock that morning. She replied evasively, "Who knows better than yourself?" Her confessor said, "I command you to tell, if you know, what we were doing at that time." She was obliged to obey, and humbly bowing her head, she replied, "You were four together in the cell of the sub-prior, and there

you conversed together a long time." She named all who were present and the subject on which they had spoken. Father Bartholomew was amazed, but he thought she might know from some of the persons present, so he determined to try her again. On the morrow he went to her, and said, "Then you know, Mother, what we do?" She answered, "My son, know that my Divine Saviour, having given me a spiritual family, leaves me in ignorance of nothing that concerns them." "You know, then, what I was doing yesterday evening at such an hour?" "Without doubt," she answered, "you were writing on a certain subject. My son, I watch and pray for you continually until I hear the matin bell of your convent. I see all that you do, and if you had good eyes, you would behold me as I do you."[1] He experienced also on another occasion this power which Catherine had of knowing what was passing at a distance. Being sent at one time to Florence to discharge the office of Lector he was attacked by scruples on the subject of a supposed irregularity in his ordination, which gave him such trouble that he left off saying Mass. One day being in the church of Santa Maria Novella, he was revolving these things in his mind in bitter grief, and thinking how Catherine would surely comfort and give him light could he but see and speak with her, he called on her to help him in his anguish as though she could actually hear him. At that very moment Catherine, who was praying in the church at Siena, was observed by her Sisters to give signs of extraordinary emotion. When they came away her companions asked for an explanation. "My son Bartholomew, at Florence," she said, "was at that moment being tormented by the enemy." She had prayed earnestly for him, and at the same time Bartholomew was unexpectedly summoned to the presence of the Bishop, who, inquiring the cause of his trouble, was able to dissipate it in a few words. Another incident somewhat similar in its character to the one just narrated is related by Raymund of Capua. It

[1] Caffarini in his Supplement tells this story a little differently, and adds that the matter on which the two religious were engaged was the registering of her own miraculous favours.

happened during his residence at Montepulciano, "where," he says, "as there was no convent of Friars, and I had with me but one companion, I was often glad to receive visits from the religious of neighbouring places. It happened once that Father Thomas della Fonte, Catherine's confessor, and Father George Naddi, professor of theology, proposed coming to see me from the convent of Siena, in order to converse and consult with me. In order to travel more quickly they took some horses which were lent them by their friends. Arrived within about six miles of Montepulciano, which is situated among the mountains, they imprudently halted to rest themselves, when some of the people of the place, perceiving the two travellers alone and unarmed, resolved on waylaying and robbing them. Going on before, therefore, to the number of ten or twelve, they awaited the arrival of the luckless friars in a solitary place. As they approached, the robbers rushed out of their ambush, dragged them from their horses, stripped them of their clothes and everything which they carried, and then led them into the depth of the forest, where they held council whether it would not be best to kill them and conceal their bodies, so as to leave no trace of their crime.

"F. Thomas seeing his danger, was lavish of his entreaties and promises to observe silence, but without effect; and when he saw that the robbers were leading them further and further into the entangled forest, he comprehended that God alone could succour them, and began to pray. Knowing how agreeable his spiritual daughter was to God, he said interiorly: "O Catherine, servant of God, help us in this peril." Scarcely had he uttered these words in his heart, than the robber nearest him, who appeared to be charged to kill him, said: "Why should we kill these poor friars who never did us any injury? it would be indeed an enormous crime! let us suffer them to go; they are good-hearted men, who will never betray us." All accepted this opinion so suddenly advanced with such unanimity, that not only they allowed the religious their lives, but even restored to them their garments, horses, and all that they had stolen, except a little money, and suffered them to go at liberty: they arrived at my house on the

same day, and related all these circumstances. When Friar Thomas returned to Siena he certified, as he wrote to me, that at the same moment in which he had invoked her assistance, Catherine said to one of her nearest companions: "Father Thomas is calling me, he is in great danger," and rising immediately she went to pray in her oratory. It cannot be doubted that it was at that moment by the efficacy of her prayers that a change so wonderful was produced in the dispositions of the robbers, which she could only have known in the spirit of prophecy, being then at a distance of four-and-twenty miles.[1]

It often happened that Bartholomew was called away from Siena either to fill the office of Lector, as at Florence, or to preach in the surrounding towns and country districts. Five of Catherine's letters to him were written whilst he was giving what we should now call a mission at Asciano, near Siena, in which she took a peculiar interest, sending some of her other spiritual sons to help him in his work. He was also Lector at Pisa for some time, and during his stay in these places helped to spread abroad her fame.

Good Master Matthew, the rector of the *Misericordia*, has already been made known to the reader, but a few particulars must be added touching the manner of his first introduction to Catherine. He and his friend, Francis Lando, went once to see her in ecstasy, as others were accustomed to do when they could obtain permission from her confessor. It was a visit of pure curiosity, and as she was quite abstracted during the whole time, they did not hear her speak a single word. But the spectacle so powerfully impressed them, and such a devotion filled their hearts, that they felt like new men. Coming away, they said one to another: "What is this? If only to see her once, without her saying one word, thus moves us to compunction, what might we not hope for if she admitted us to the number of her spiritual children!" They therefore returned with a far more serious purpose; and when they had once listened to her prudent words, and saw the sweet courtesy of her manners, yielding to the charm

[1] Legend, Part 2, ch. ix.

which none could resist, they gave themselves to her as to their mistress and Mother.

Next on our list of Catherine's disciples comes one different in character and position from any yet named, Neri di Landoccio dei Paglieresi, a man of good family, well skilled in letters, and a writer of graceful verses, which have earned for him no mean repute. We know neither the time nor the occasion of his first introduction to Catherine, but it seems to have been about the year 1370. When once she had accepted him as her disciple, he never separated from her, but accompanied her on all her journeys, and was the first of the three noble youths who acted as her secretaries. He had the true poetic temperament, a gift of doubtful value to its possessor, and which in his case was linked with much sorrow. "The lover, the poet, and the madman," says Shakespeare, "are of imagination all compact;" and Neri during one brief period in his life knew what it was for a tortured imagination to overmaster reason. Sensitive in the extreme, and ever trembling on the verge of religious despondency, Catherine had to be always lifting him out of his natural tendency to sadness and discouragement, and infusing into him her own strong and high-hearted hope. We have her first letter to him, written on one of the occasions when F. Bartholomew Dominic was preaching at Asciano, whither Neri had accompanied him and was assisting him in his work. It was in the early days of his friendship with Catherine, and in reply to his request to be received among her disciples, she wrote as follows: "You ask me to receive you as my son; I am unworthy to do so, for I am only a poor sinner; yet I both have received you, and will do so with all affection. I promise to answer for you before God for any faults you may have committed, only, I conjure you, satisfy my desires; conform yourself to Christ crucified, and separate yourself utterly from the world."[1]

In another letter, written a little later, she tries to calm the troubles of his conscience. Neri's habitual mental trial was this: that he could not realise that God had forgiven him his sins.

[1] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 1, § 3.

"Let the trouble of your soul (she says) be destroyed in the hope of the Blood. True self-knowledge by humbling you will increase light. Is not God more ready to pardon than we to offend? Is He not our Physician, and are not we His sick children? Has He not borne our iniquities, and is not sadness the worst of all our faults? Yes, it assuredly is so, my dear son. Open your eyes then to the light of faith. See how much you are beloved of God, and beholding His love, do not be troubled because you likewise see the ignorance and coldness of your own heart, but let self-knowledge only increase your humility and kindle your love. The more you see how badly you correspond to the great graces bestowed on you by your Creator, the more you will humble yourself, saying, with holy resolution, 'That which hitherto I have failed to do, I will do now.' Remember that discouragement will make you entirely forget the teaching that has been given you; it is a leprosy which dries up alike both soul and body. It chains the arms of holy desire, and prevents our doing what we would; it renders the soul insupportable to itself and agitates it with a thousand phantoms. It takes away all light, natural and supernatural, and so the soul falls into a thousand infidelities, not knowing the end for which God created her; *that He created her, namely, to give her life eternal!* Courage, then, and let a lively faith and firm hope in the precious Blood triumph over the demon who would trouble you" (Letter 274).

This beautiful letter contains the sum of all Catherine's instructions to this holy, but much tried soul. He proved himself worthy to be her son; yet, as we shall see, even to the end the same dark shadow dogged his footsteps and caused him a life-long martyrdom. Neri had a great talent for friendship, and succeeded in bringing not a few of his friends to join the number of Catherine's disciples. Among these was Gabriel di Davino Piccolomini, a married man, whose son Giovanni at the instance of the Saint took the Dominican habit. Gabriel belonged to that noble family of Siena, whose boast it is to have given to the Church four cardinals, fourteen archbishops, twenty-one bishops,

and two popes, of whom one was destined to pronounce the canonisation of St. Catherine. No less illustrious in the career of arms, the family records are full of the great deeds of those warlike Piccolomini who headed the armies of the republic as well as those of foreign states. Gabriel shared this military spirit, and his chivalrous character longed for the proclamation of another crusade that he might take the Cross and strike a blow for Christendom. Herein was his great bond of sympathy with Catherine, whose heart responded to any note of true generous enthusiasm, and who would gladly have armed all her spiritual sons and sent them to fight against the infidels. When she wrote to Gabriel, therefore, she clothed her spiritual exhortations in military language, and spoke to him of arms and the battlefield, of courage and the love of glory. She told him to strike hard at his spiritual enemies with the sword of patience, to put on the cuirass of true charity, blazoned with the vermilion coat of arms of Jesus crucified. "I speak to you of these arms," she says, "that you may be the better ready when the standard of the Holy Cross is raised. I want to make you understand which are the best weapons; begin to make use of them now when you are still among Christians, that they may not be rusty when you march against the infidels."

Gabriel's brave honest nature made him embrace the cause of Catherine as a true champion: he opposed himself with loyal fidelity to all calumnies raised against her, and to use the language of the Process, "could not abide any who were wont to speak against the holy virgin." He led a most holy life, and was present on many occasions when the extraordinary powers of the Saint over the bodies and souls of men were most strikingly manifested. He was buried in the church of San Domenico "*sub picturis B. Katerinæ de Senis*," as though to mark his fidelity to her, even until death.

Another of Neri's friends has left the history of his first acquaintance with Catherine written by his own hand, and his testimony regarding her is perhaps one of the most valuable of any that has been preserved. This was Don Francesco Malevolti,

who, like Gabriel, belonged to one of the noblest stocks of Siena. He describes himself at the age of twenty-five as being "hot-tempered and audacious on account of his family and nation," and was living a worldly life, intolerant of any kind of restraint. "Among the companions whom I loved the best," he says, "there was one noble youth of Siena, named Neri Landoccio dei Paglieresi, with whom I spent the greater part of my time, both because he was virtuous and agreeable, and also because he was a composer of most beautiful verses, in which kind of thing I then greatly delighted. After we had been intimate for some time, Neri having heard of the fame of the glorious virgin Catherine, went to see her without my knowing it, and so had become greatly changed, and, as it were, a new man. And pitying me on account of the dissolute life I was leading, for he loved my soul more than my body, he often begged me to go with him and speak to her. I gave little heed to his words, however, only laughing at them, and so some time passed without my granting his request. At last, not wishing to vex him, because of the singular friendship that united us, I told him one day that I was willing to gratify him; though in my secret soul I went out of no kind of devotion, but rather in derision, resolved, if she spoke to me on the subject of religion, and particularly of confession, to give her such an answer that she would not venture to speak to me again. But when we came into her gracious presence, I had no sooner beheld her face than there came upon me such an awful fear and trembling that I almost fainted; and though, as I have said, I had not the least thought or intention of confession, yet at the first words she spoke, God so marvellously changed my heart that I went at once to confession and became the very opposite of what I had been before. After that I visited her several times, and left off all my miserable habits, and instead of frequenting as formerly places where there was singing and dancing, I now fled from them, and found my delight in visiting churches, and conversing with the servants of God. However, though I often went to her house and took great pleasure in her admirable doctrine, and speedily corrected

my vicious habits, yet being still weak, and not fully established in the right way, it chanced once that I fell into a grievous fault, which none but God, however, could possibly have known. The next time I went to her house, before I had even come into her presence, she sent for me, and dismissing all those who were present, she made me sit down beside her and said, 'Tell me, when were you last at confession?' I replied, 'Last Saturday,' which was true, that being the custom with all of us who conversed with her. Then she said, 'Go to confession directly!' I replied, 'Sweet Mother, to-morrow is Saturday, I will go then.' But she only replied by saying, 'Go, and do as I bid you.' I still pleaded for some delay and refused to go, when with her face all bright and kindling, she said to me, 'How, my son, do you think I have not my eyes always open upon my children? You can neither do nor say anything of which I am ignorant. And how can you suppose that to be hidden from me which you have just been doing? Go then at once and wash yourself from this misery.' Confused and full of shame I obeyed her commands at once; and this was not the only occasion when she manifested to me not only my secret acts, but also my thoughts both good and bad, and that always in very modest and humble words.

"Another time much later than this, after her return from Avignon, I had fallen back into something of my old way of life; and going to see her, she received me like a kind and sweet mother with a joyful countenance, which greatly encouraged my weakness. But one of her companions who was with her complained somewhat of me, saying that I had very little stability. She only smiled, however, and said, 'Never mind, my Sisters, for he cannot escape out of my hands whatever way he may choose to take; for when he will think that I am far enough away, I shall put such a yoke on his neck that he will never be able to get out of it again.' What this prophecy meant and the manner of its accomplishment will be seen in a future chapter.

Two of Francesco's worldly companions, Neri Urgughieri and

Nicholas Ughelli determined to present themselves to the Saint, and show themselves proof against her influence. But no sooner had they entered her presence than all their boldness vanished, and they found themselves unable to speak so much as a word. Catherine sweetly reproached them for the injurious language they had used against her. "Madam," they stammered, "you have but to command us, and we will do your bidding." At her desire they presented themselves to F. Thomas, and made a confession of their whole lives.

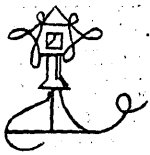
Very different from these brave and accomplished gentlemen is the next of the little company for whom we must solicit the reader's indulgent patience. Ser Christofano di Galgano Guidini, or, as he is more commonly called, Christofano di Gano, has contrived to make himself better known to posterity than many men of more genius than he. In fact, genius he had none, and what happy fatality put the thought into his head of becoming an author can never now be known. He was a man of low birth, a plain notary and man of business, who lived in the world of matter of fact, and was equally insensible to the poetic as to the humorous. He had the fidelity and the plodding perseverance of a terrier dog; nothing ever turned him from his purpose. So the thought having once suggested itself to him of writing his memoirs, he carried it into effect as a grave and solemn duty. Never surely did a man sit down to such a task who had less to say about himself, and never has it chanced that memoirs so barren of interest on all points save one should have enjoyed the fame accorded to his. It is thus he introduces his work to his readers.

"In this book shall be written certain memoirs of me, Ser Christofano di Gano, notary of Siena, who live at Uvile,[1] in the Propolo di San Pietro; of my doings. And because it is only lately that I began to write my memoirs, they will not be very long. To which memoirs, written by my hand, entire faith may be given, by reason that they are true, as is everything contained

[1] The Porta Ovile, on the north-west extremity of Siena.

in this book; and to make them of greater faith, I have set to them by sign—

Jesu, my sign.



Christofano, the aforesaid notary.

In the name of God, Amen.

"Memoirs of certain of my doings, done by me, Ser Christofano di Gano di Guidini, notary of Siena, who am now living at Uvile, in the house which belonged to Abra di Cione Barocci, who bought it of Chimento di Niccolo. This book and these memoirs I have written with my own hand in memory of my doings. However, as I have said above, it is only a short time ago that I began to write and keep memoirs of my doings, and I have not written them all, as many do, but only a part. And first, it will be manifest to any one who sees this writing that I, Ser Christofano di Gano aforesaid, am of low extraction." He then proceeds to relate his early history: how his father married his mother, who had a hundred florins for her dowry, which was never paid; how his father died of the plague in 1348, after getting into debt and leaving nothing behind him; and Christofano at the age of two was left to his mother's care and in great poverty. They went to live at Rugomagno with her father, Manno Piccolomini, who did his best for the boy, had him taught "Donatus," that is his Latin grammar, and got him placed as "repeater"[1] to the children of Ristoro Gallerani. In this employment he got six florins a year and his expenses, and was able meanwhile to learn the notary's business. So he plodded on, scraping together an education as well as he could, and getting various small employments, till at last he came to live in Siena and to have business at the Palazzo, and in short to get on in the world, as a steady painstaking man of his calibre was

[1] That is, he helped the children to repeat their school lessons.

pretty sure of doing. We will now let him continue his own story.

"At the time when I began to live in Siena God put forth a new star in the world. This was the venerable Catherine, daughter to Monna Lapa of Fontebranda, a tertiary to whom I was introduced by Neri di Landoccio and Nigi di Doccio, two of her spiritual sons.[1] Both then and afterwards I heard things from her which it is not possible for a man to utter, and such as none who had not heard them would believe possible from a woman. Wherefore, listening to her holy teaching, I became pretty intimate with her, and so God touched my heart to despise the things of the world, and I had a mind rather to leave the world than to defile myself with it. But my mother, fearing I should choose some other state of life, began to beg me and to get others to beg me to marry. For her sake, then, I began to consent to take a wife, and among others that I thought of, there were three, the daughter of Francesco Ventura, and the one I now have, and another, whose name I do not at this moment remember.

"Catherine was not then at Siena, with whom I could have taken counsel, and though things had gone some way, yet I would do nothing till I had written to her. She was then at Pisa; so I wrote to her, telling her how I had a conscience of leaving my mother, that my word was given too far to go back, and asking her to advise me which of the three I should take; how one had been married before, though her husband had not lived long, and other things I do not now remember. Catherine having received my letter replied to it, and out of reverence to her, and also because her reply contains some remarkable things, I will here give it. Outside was written, 'Given to Ser Christofano di Gano, notary of Siena,' and inside as follows."

He then gives the letter, which is printed at length in Gigli's Edition (No. 240). Catherine had believed him called to another

[1] With all his matter of fact, Christofano makes a rule of omitting all dates which would be of the least value. We do not therefore know in what year he made Catherine's acquaintance; it might have been at any time between 1368 and 1375.

state of life, but seeing the line matters had taken, with her usual prudence she does not seek to argue with him, but only to confirm him in his good resolution, whatever state he might be led to enter. "Since it is so," she says, "I pray the Sovereign Truth to extend His holy hand over you, and to direct you in the state which may best please Him. In all states and in all your works fix your eye on Him, and seek His honour, and the salvation of His creatures. As to the choice of a wife, it is painful for me to have to occupy myself in this matter, which is more suitable to seculars. However, I cannot oppose your desire, and examining the conditions of the three you name, I find them all good. If you do not object to take the one who has been married before, do so, otherwise take the daughter of Francesco Ventura. I pray the Supreme Charity to shed on you both the plentitude of His grace."

"And now," continues Christofano, "before we say more of the holy spouse of Christ, Catherine, let us make here three tabernacles." We shall follow his example, and for the present quote no further from this singular biography, though we shall frequently be indebted to its notices of Catherine's disciples and friends; we will only here observe that he does not seem to have taken either of the two ladies above spoken of, and after asking Catherine to choose his wife for him, he ended, quite naturally, by pleasing himself. We have presented our readers with a poet among St. Catherine's disciples; the little society could likewise reckon in its ranks a painter. The Vanni of Siena were a family of artists. Andrea Vanni was not perhaps the most illustrious of their number, nor was he so entirely devoted to his art as to neglect the career of a statesman. In fact, Catherine's acquaintance with him came about through his political connection with her brothers. In 1368 he was one of the leaders of the popular party, and took part in the revolution which resulted in the overthrow of the "Twelve." After that time he held office in the "Mount of the Riformatori" and attained the first post in the Government, being one of the "Defenders" in 1370, conjointly with the Saint's brother Bartolo. In 1373 he was Gonfalonier of

Justice, and in the same year went as ambassador to Pope Gregory XI. at Avignon, in company with two other Sienese of noble birth, to solicit the Pope's return to Rome. In 1376 he was Rector of what was called the "Opera del Duomo," a sort of standing committee for finishing the Cathedral of Siena; for which office his knowledge of art rendered him much better fitted than for political life. At last in 1379 we find him Captain of the people, holding that dignity for the two months of September and October. This was a post of much dignity and importance, and could not be held by a foreigner. The Capitano was in fact at the head of the magistrates in time of peace, while in time of war it was his duty to guard the *Carroccio*, or great car on which the standard of the republic was borne to battle; and in his red toga, red cap, red shoes, and red stockings, with golden cords and other ornaments, he made no little display before the eyes of the people.

Some of Andrea Vanni's despatches have been preserved, which do not impress us with much idea of his powers as a man of the pen. One of them is written under the pressure of money difficulties, which he complains of bitterly, inasmuch as he affirms he has made sacrifices for his country and neglected his shop and his business to attend to the affairs of the Commune. He was a great friend of Christofano di Gano, for whom he is believed to have painted a portrait of Catherine which has not been preserved. One of her letters is addressed to him when Captain of the people. Another is written to him whilst holding some other office during the season of Advent, probably the months of November and December. Neither of the letters have anything very special in them, and they are chiefly directed to reminding Vanni to go to his duties like a good Christian at least once a year. She also exhorts him to be a just magistrate, and in her Advent letter asks him to make it a sweet Advent by keeping the coming feast of Christmas close to the crib of the humble Lamb. "There you will find Mary, the poor traveller, adoring her Son: she has no riches, nothing suitable in which to wrap Him, no fire by which to warm Him, the Divine Fire; only the

HEAD OF ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

From the Painting by Andrea Vanni

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beasts who bend over His little Body and warm Him with their breath." Is it fanciful to suppose that Catherine, as she wrote these words, did not forget that she was addressing a *painter* (indeed, she addresses her letter "To Master Andrea Vanni, *painter*"), and that she drew her picture of the crib of Bethlehem as it would commend itself to his artist's eye?

Some of Vanni's pictures are yet to be seen at St. Francesco, *fuori dell' Ovile*, and elsewhere. His fame, however, chiefly rests (at any rate to the lovers of St. Catherine) on that portrait of the Saint, attributed to his pencil, which is still to be seen in the Church of San Domenico. It was painted as far back as 1367, as appears from the inscription on the spot. In 1667 it was taken from the wall it originally occupied, and transferred to its present position. It was before this picture that the Blessed John Dominic received a favour, the account of which he gives in his letter to his mother, Paola. Having asked to be received into the Order of Preachers when seventeen years of age, he was on the point of being rejected in consequence of an impediment in his speech which seemed to make him useless to their community. However, he overcame them by his prayers, and being at Siena and feeling a great wish to preach, he suffered much on account of his incapacity, to remedy which he twice had an operation performed on his tongue, but without success. One day, however, being in the church, he prayed earnestly before this portrait of the Saint that she would obtain from her Divine Spouse that his tongue might be loosed, that so he might announce the Word of God. His prayer was granted, and he lived to become one of the greatest preachers of his Order.

Many copies, good and bad, have been made of this picture, and it is the original from which almost all the engravings have been taken which profess to be the portraits of St. Catherine. It is much injured by time, and has evidently been retouched, for on the extended hand of the Saint there now appears the sacred stigma. This could not certainly have been represented by Vanni in 1367, nine years before that mysterious favour was granted to the Saint. However, the outline and general character

of the figure and features are undoubtedly genuine. She is represented in abstraction of mind, in which unconscious state a devout disciple kneels and reverently kisses her hand, a circumstance which often actually took place, and gave rise to many murmurs.

We will pass briefly over the names of some other of Catherine's devoted followers, such as Anastagio di Monte Altino, who wrote her life in verse, Jacomo del Pecora, the knight of Montepulciano, who wrote two poems on her; and after becoming acquainted with her gave up all he possessed, and followed her as a disciple; and Peter Ventura Dei Borgognoni, who was brought to Catherine by his sister, that she might say something to the profit of his soul, and who was thoroughly gained at his first interview. For Catherine asking him how long it was since he had been to confession, he replied, "A few days ago." "Not so," she said, "it is seven years since you have been." Then she reminded him of all the chief sins of his life, and sent him at once to wash them away in the Sacrament of Penance. A somewhat more particular notice is claimed by the good hermit, Fra Santi, a native of Teramo in the Abruzzi, and a friend of many saints, among others of St. John Colombini, and B. Peter Petroni. "He was holy by name and by life," says F. Raymund, "and having quitted his parents and country for God's sake, had settled in Siena, where for more than thirty years he led a solitary life, never speaking of himself, and following the direction of holy and pious religious. In his old age he found the precious pearl of the Gospel, our blessed Catherine. For her sake he gave up the quiet of his cell and the manner of life he had been so long used to in order to labour for others; and he constantly affirmed that he found more peace and profit to his soul in following and listening to her than he had ever found in solitude. He suffered from a disease in the heart, and the Saint taught him to bear his continual sufferings not only with resignation, but even with joy." It is not to be supposed by this account that Fra Santi abandoned his hermitage, though he often quitted it to accompany Catherine on her journeys. On the contrary, his cell had more than once the

privilege of affording her a place of quiet retreat. In company with some of her religious Sisters she would often visit the holy old man in his hermitage, finding in his little oratory a welcome change from the noise and bustle of the city. It is remarkable that Catherine had a great love for hermits, and numbered several among her disciples. There were an extraordinary number of hermits in the Sienese territory, all of them, as Father Thomas Angiolini tells us, supported at the expense of the Republic. And as by far the most distinguished of these was a countryman of our own, whom we desire to make well known to English readers, we will not omit mention of him in this place, but in consideration of the interest which attaches to his name will give him and his companions a chapter to themselves.

CHAPTER XII

The Hermits of Lecceto

ABOUT three miles from Siena are still to be seen the remains of the monastery of Lecceto, a venerable sanctuary which derives its origin from a few hermits who fled from persecution in the fourth century, and being found here by St. Augustine as he passed through these parts, received their rule from him about the year 391. Landucci, the Augustinian chronicler, claims them therefore as the true founders of the "Hermits of St. Augustine." Their retreat was a thick wood of oaks (*Sylva Ilicitana*), whence the name of Lecceto is derived. It was called by many titles, all indicative of its sylvan solitude, as "The Shady Hermitage," "The Hermitage of the Wood;" while attached to it, at a little distance, was another retreat known as "The Hermitage of the Lake." It was in old time a woody wilderness, so overgrown with bushes that they were only cleared with immense labour. In St. Catherine's days the great oak forest still offered the charms of solitary retreat to the good hermits, among whom she counted not a few of her most devoted disciples. One of these was the prior, Master John Tantucci, a member of the noble family of that name settled in Siena. He was commonly called John III., as being the third prior of that name who had governed the convent. He was a man of genius and learning, and had finished his theological course at the University of Cambridge,[1] where he graduated

[1] Father Ambrose Ansano Tantucci, O.P., of the same family, who, in 1754, edited the *Supplimento* of Caffarini, has gone sadly astray in his English names, and tells us that John III. was Doctor in the "then famous university of *Cantonberi*" (!) Burlamacchi, a little happier, but not entirely accurate, and possibly victimised by a printer's error, calls it "*Cambudge*." From other authorities, however, we know that he graduated at Cambridge.

as Doctor. The manner in which this "great learned Doctor" (as Father Fen calls him) first became known to Catherine is remarkable; and as this story has been admirably told by Francesco Malevolti, it shall here be quoted at some length. The precise date at which the events he relates took place is not given; but they must belong either to 1373, or the year following. "There were," he says, "at that time in the city of Siena two religious, very influential and of great renown. One was called Brother Gabriel of Volterra, of the Order of Friars Minors, Master of Sacred Theology, of whom it was said that there was no man in the whole Order so mighty for learning and preaching as he was; and who was at that time Minister Provincial. The other was called John III., also a Master of Sacred Theology; he was of Siena, of the Order of Augustinian Hermits. These two powerful masters used sometimes, when speaking together, to murmur against the blessed Catherine, saying, 'This ignorant woman goes about seducing persons with her false expositions of Holy Scripture, and is leading other souls along with her own to hell; but we shall take such order in the matter that she shall see her error.' So after many conversations of this sort they resolved to go both together on a certain day, and with difficult theological questions to shut up her mouth and put her to shame. But the Holy Spirit who spoke by that holy virgin took care to dispose things otherwise. When the appointed day came, they went with their companions to Catherine's house. Now it so happened that when they arrived, our Lord so disposing it, many persons of both sexes were at the moment with her, having come together to listen to her holy words. There was Brother Thomas della Fonte, and a certain Brother Matthew Tolomei of the same Order, and Nicholas Mimi, a great servant of God, and Thomas Guelfaccio, a Gesuat, all men of good report: and Neri Landoccio, already named, and Gabriel Piccolomini, and many others whom I cannot remember. Likewise Donna Alexia, Donna Lisa, and Donna Cecca of Clement, and others, all Sisters of Penance; I also, though unworthy, was among the rest. And as we stood there listening to the admirable words of that holy virgin, she suddenly broke off her discourse,

and becoming as it were all on fire, with her face quite resplendent, she lifted her eyes to heaven, and said, 'Blessed be Thou, O sweet and Eternal Spouse, who findest out so many new ways by which Thou leadest souls unto Thyself!' We all stood amazed and attentive, observing her words and gestures, and Father Thomas, her confessor, said to her, 'Tell me, daughter, what does all this mean that you have just said? Let us understand something about it.' Then like an obedient daughter she replied, 'Father, you will presently see two great fishes caught in the nets.' She said no more, and we were standing in great surprise awaiting what would come next, when lo! one of the companions of the virgin who lived in the house with her came in, and said to her: 'Mother, Master Gabriel of Volterra of the Friars Minors, with a companion, and Master John III., of the brethren of St. Augustine, with a companion, are below, and wish to see you.' She went at once to meet them, and behold, they themselves came up and entered the room where we were. When therefore Catherine had shown them great respect and made them sit down, and the rest of us stood near (as they said they did not wish to speak to her in private), these two masters, like raging lions, full of the purpose they had conceived, began to put forth the most difficult theological questions to that meek and tender virgin, thinking to find her defenceless and forsaken by her most sweet Spouse. So when Master Gabriel had said what he thought good, the same was repeated by Master John, who added another most difficult question, both intentionally perplexing the matter, believing that she would remain quite vanquished, so that they might afterwards have occasion of giving vent to their malice and ill-will. But the Holy Spirit, who forsaketh not those who put their trust in Him, gave his handmaid such wisdom and strength that she would have been able to have overthrown, not these two only, but ten thousand such as they, had they been there. And so when these masters had proposed their questions, she stood for awhile with her eyes lifted up to heaven, they meantime awaiting her reply. At last, with her countenance all beaming with Divine zeal, she turned to them; and though she bore her-

self towards them with great reverence, yet she broke out in words to this effect: 'Oh! confounded, confounded, be this inflated science of yours, which does yourselves so much harm and to others so little good whilst you use it as you do! What does such a saint say in such a place, and such a one, and such a one?' And thus she continued bringing forth many examples to them. At last she concluded, saying, 'How can *you* understand these things? *you* who only seek after the husk of truth that you may please creatures and win praise from them? and on this only have you set your hearts; but, my Fathers, do so no more for the love of Jesus crucified.' Wonderful to relate, these two great pillars were forthwith cast to the earth; these two wolves became tender lambs, so immediately were they changed to the contrary of what they had been before. The first-named, Master Gabriel, had previously lived in such pomp that in his convent out of three cells he had made for himself one; and furnished it in such sumptuous style as would have been superfluous for a Cardinal. There was a fine bed with a canopy and curtains round about it, all of silk; and so many other precious things that reckoning with them the books, they were worth not less than a hundred ducats. But this man, touched by the Spirit of God at the words spoken to him by His handmaid, was suddenly stricken with such fear, that taking the keys from his girdle in the presence of us all, he cried out: 'Is there any one here who for the love of God will go and give away all that I have in my cell?' At once there rose up Nicholas Mimi and Thomas Guelfaccio, and taking the keys they asked him, 'What do you wish us to do?' And he answered, 'Go to my cell, and whatever you find there give away for the love of God, so that nothing may remain except my Breviary.' So they went, and perfectly fulfilled all he had charged them with; for they distributed the books among the other brethren who were students in the convent, and all the rest they gave to the poor, leaving nothing in the cell save what might suffice for one poor observant Brother. Master Gabriel himself, though he was Minister Provincial of the Order, went afterwards to the monastery of Santa Croce at Florence,

where he lived in great fervour, and appointed himself to serve the brethren in their refectory at meal time, and exercised many other acts of humility. Master John III. did as much, and even more; for though he had not so much to distribute, yet he also only reserved to himself his Breviary; and at once forsaking all the things of this world, and his hermitage also, he followed the holy virgin Catherine wherever she went, even as far as Avignon, and from thence to Rome and many other places even to the time of her departure. And he was one of the three confessors deputed by the See Apostolic to hear the confessions of those who by the means of the said holy virgin should be brought to salutary penance."

Thus much for the conversion of John III., but he was not the only or the most illustrious disciple whom Catherine possessed in the hermitage of Lecceto. Among the holy solitaries of that oak forest was Father William Flete, the English "Bachelor," as he was commonly called by the Saint and her companions. "This excellent religious," says Caffarini, in the third part of his Supplement, "chancing to pass through Tuscany, had become enamoured of that beautiful desert; and having obtained leave from his superiors, he determined there to abide with the sole thought of giving himself to the things of God, and not caring to pursue after the honour of the Doctorate or the advantages he might thereby attain." In fact, he was as unlike to Master John in his natural tastes as could well be supposed, though they were probably fellow students at Cambridge. The author of the *Miracoli* informs us that his devotion to Catherine began even before he had seen her, and that their acquaintance had in it something of a supernatural character. "There is," he says, "in the Wood of the Lake, a hermitage of St. Augustine, about four miles from Siena, in which is an English brother, called 'The Bachelor.' They call him 'The Bachelor of the Wood of the Lake,' and he has been there more than twelve years. He is a man of great learning, and venerable for his holiness and love of solitude. He often lives in the caves which he has himself made in the most obscure and savage parts of the forest: and there he takes his books, flying from the conversation of men. He goes

as he likes from the church to the forest, and from the forest to the church. He is a man of wise counsel, the friend of God and of a most holy life, speaking little, and only when necessity requires. He has never seen Catherine, nor she him; but they know each other through the instinct of the Holy Spirit, so that they speak of each other with great reverence and respect." This account agrees with that of Christofano di Gano, who says that "he was a man of great penance, held in reverence by many people; that most of his time he abode in the forest, only returning to his convent in the evening, and that he never drank anything but vinegar and water."

Though F. William may not have known Catherine personally at this time, yet they probably corresponded. His determination not to leave his solitude without necessity prevented his going often to Siena, but in spite of his recluse habits he was a member of the Company of La Scala, and had had something to do with the conversion of Master Matthew, so that he could not have kept so absolutely in his caves as the above anonymous writer (whose accuracy is not always to be trusted) seems to have imagined. But if he could not come to visit Catherine, she was not prevented from visiting him. Lecceto, it must be remembered, was one of the holy places of Siena, visited as a sanctuary by Popes and Princes, and by many saints, among others by the holy Father, St. Dominic. Catherine, as we know from the Legend, was fond of making such pious pilgrimages, and on a certain feast of St. Paul, F. Thomas della Fonte, and F. Donato of Florence, who were going to Lecceto, came to her house and proposed that she should accompany them. Catherine, who was just recovering from a prolonged ecstasy, which had lasted three days and three nights, was still so absorbed in the thought of the wonderful revelations she had received, that when the two friars tried to rouse her, saying, "We are going to visit the hermit who lives out in the country,[1] will you go with us?" she, hardly

[1] Leg., Part 2, ch. v. We know that the hermitage of Lecceto is here meant, for Raymund speaks of "a venerable religious of the *Order of Hermits*, who resided in the country."

conscious of what they said, answered "Yes." But no sooner had she uttered the word than the exquisite tenderness of her conscience reproached her with it as with a falsehood. Her grief restored her to perfect consciousness, and she mourned over the fault for as many days and nights as she had been in ecstasy.

Though Catherine did not accompany the brethren on this occasion, yet it is certain that she did visit Lecceto later, and that more than once. The wild beauty of the spot and the shadow of its mighty oaks had no less charms for her than for the English hermit, for Catherine had a true sense of natural beauty, as is apparent from a thousand passages in her writings. She therefore often came to the Wood of the Lake; and when she did so she occupied a little room near the church, used as a chapel, where may still be seen her portrait, and over the door the following inscription: "*Siste hic, viator, et has ædes (erectas a B. Joanne Incontrio,*[1] *Anno* 1330) *ubi Seraphica Catherina Senensis Sponsum receptavit Christum, venerare memento.*"

From the time of their first meeting, F. William became one of Catherine's most attached disciples; she contrived to interest him in all her affairs, and he often acted as her confessor. It was in the January of 1376 that he wrote down from her dictation, and probably in the above-named chapel, that spiritual "Document" before alluded to, which throws much light on her interior life. There is no doubt, however, that if F. William had a fault, it was his excessive love of solitude, and Catherine did not fail to tell him of it. His continual absence from the convent and habit of abiding in the woods with his books gave trouble to his Prior. "I must tell you on the part of our Lord," writes Catherine to him, "that you ought to say mass in the convent[2] more than once a week if the Prior wishes it: I would even say that you should celebrate there every day if that is his desire. You will not lose grace by sacrificing your consolations, you will

[1] A saint of Lecceto.

[2] He generally said mass in one of the grotto chapels, of which there were many.

rather gain more in proportion as you give up your own will. If we would show our hunger for souls and our love of our neighbour, we must not be attached to consolations, we must listen to other people's troubles, and have compassion on those who are bound to us by the bonds of charity; it is a great fault if you do not do this. For example, I would have you show compassion for the troubles and difficulties of Brother Anthony, and not refuse to listen to him; and Anthony in like manner should listen to you. I beg of you to do this for Christ's sake, and mine; it is the way to keep up true charity between you: otherwise, you will give the enemy occasion to sow discord." Then she concludes with one of those touches so characteristic of her style: "I pray that you may be united *to the Divine Tree*, and transformed in Christ crucified." (Letter 128.) She did not forget that she was writing to one who would probably read her letter under the shadow of those mighty ilex trees he loved so well. Father William, however, stood in need of having the salutary lesson repeated more than once. In another letter (124) she reads him a very profitable lecture on the indiscretions into which even the most perfect souls may fall, such as half-killing themselves by excessive austerities, judging others who do not follow the same way as themselves, and liking to choose their own times, places, and modes of consolation. Such persons always say that they want consolation, not for their own sake, but to please God better, but she exposes the delusion and holds up before him another rule of perfection. "In truly perfect souls," she says, "self-will is dead, and in nothing do they see the will of man, but only that of God. Such souls have a foretaste of life eternal. . . . But I do not see this perfection in you, and it makes me sad. God has given you great lights; He has called you first to abandon the world, secondly, to have a great love of penance, and thirdly, a desire for His honour. *Do not hinder your perfection by spiritual self-will.*" F. William took all her exhortations in good part, for he reverenced her as truly a saint. Christofano says that he held her in such respect that he would touch her very garments as though they were holy relics.

"He used often to say to us," says the same writer, "You none of you know her, the Pope himself might think it an honour to be one of her sons. Truly the Holy Ghost dwelleth in her!"

The testimony of one who had so many opportunities of knowing Catherine, and who enjoyed her most intimate confidence, is doubtless of the greatest value, and fortunately this testimony has been carefully preserved. F. Tantucci, in his translation of the third part of Caffarini's *Supplimento*, observes that "after Catherine's death, F. William Flete drew up a compendious legend of the prodigious virtues of the Saint in the form of a sermon, or panegyric. Our author (Caffarini) declares that both whilst living in Siena and also at Venice he had often seen this sermon, *but not being now to be found, we must suppose that from the scarcity of copies it has been lost.*" This supposition is happily incorrect, for the *Sermo in reverentiam Beatæ Katherinæ de Senis* is one of the great treasures of the Communal Library of Siena, and an authentic copy of this precious manuscript is in the possession of the writer. The original is in the handwriting of the fifteenth century, and is adorned with a miniature. The panegyric was composed in the year 1382, as is stated on the title-page,[1] thus disproving the statement of Tantucci and others, that F. Flete died in the same year with St. Catherine. Had the good father ever seen the sermon he would have corrected his account of it in another point also, and would certainly not have called it a *compendious* legend. Brevity was not the soul of F. William's wit; but we pardon his prolixity and disposition to illustrate the life and character of his beloved mother by copious quotations from every one of the books of Holy Scripture, for the sake of the genuine and original evidence which he renders to her sanctity; the more valuable as it was given many years before Raymund's Legend had seen the light.

In the first place, then, we discover from his own words the

[1] *Sermo in reverentiam Beatæ Katherinæ de Senis, compositus in Anno Domini* MCCCLXXXII, *per magm. Servum Dei Anglicum qui vocatus est frater Guglielmus de Anglia de Ord. Heremit. S. Augustini.*—Cod. T. ii. 7, a. c, 17.

precise meaning of what Christofano di Gano tells us concerning his reverence for *her clothes*. "Not only the person, but the very garments of this holy virgin," he says, "gave out a most exquisite perfume; and so did the things that she merely touched; and we who were intimate with her were sensible of this fragrance which came forth from her clothes, like the sweet odour of a field which the Lord hath blessed. . . . How often have I seen her praying, prostrate with her face on the earth, for sinners, for the Church of God, for the Sovereign Pontiff and all prelates, and for the reform of all the evils which afflicted the Spouse of Christ; and when she thus prayed she suffered incredible pains, a very agony in every part of her body. It was the same when she prayed in ecstasy, raised above the ground in the air, as we have many times beheld her. At such times she underwent a mysterious passion; her bones seemed to crack and to be disjointed, and her heart to be torn and rent by the fervour of her supplications; she would be bathed in so profuse a sweat that her Sisters were sometimes forced to change her clothes even more than once, whilst blood would flow from her mouth in the extremity of her suffering. If on coming to herself she perceived this, she would cover it with her foot, lest it should be observed by any one. These raptures were chiefly after Holy Communion, when often as we looked fixedly on her we beheld her face changed, now into the likeness of our Lord, now into that of an angel or seraph, which caused us no small terror. . . . And from these ecstasies Alexia and Lisa were forced generally to rouse her. Her life was doubtless a miracle, one long-continued martyrdom for the Church of God. What she suffered when she attempted to eat is known only to God; and all this she endured for sinners for whose salvation she would gladly have died, had it been needed, a hundred times a-day. Her thoughts were always intent on heaven, seeking how to draw other souls thither. Her heart, inflamed with the love of her Spouse, became transformed into the very likeness of the Object beloved. Some one once said to her, 'Mother, have you a home of your own?' To which she answered sweetly, 'Yes, I have a home; it is in the wounded

Side of Christ crucified, my Spouse.' Another time I said to her, 'Mother, how can you live in such continued sufferings?' She glanced upwards, saying, 'I live, yet not I, but Jesus Christ liveth in me.' Wonderful were her labours for the Church and for souls. How many blasphemers, obstinate sinners grown old in vice, and those who had never named the name of God, or obeyed His Church, were by her means converted and brought to penance! She despised no one, she rejected no one, not even the greatest sinners. She welcomed all who came to her, sometimes prostrating and kneeling to them, at other times pressing them to her heart. She suffered many to kiss her hand, she, the border of whose garments they were not worthy to touch. Some in their pride and ignorant malice took offence at this, but indeed, she beheld the souls of those before her, and often took no note of their bodies. Many came to her from the most distant countries, and to all she was a star of consolation. No one in affliction ever went to her without receiving comfort. When she arrived in any place, the joy of the people was universal only to think that Catherine of Siena was present among them; and when she left them they would ask for her blessing and rejoice to think that their country had been so honoured. Such was our mother, vituperated in life by evil tongues, even among the number of her familiar companions, worn out with labours and fatigues, pressed down by the burden of the Church which she bore upon her shoulders! Woe to us, her children, unworthy of the name! Woe to us, because we can no longer have recourse to that most sweet mother! What teaching she would give us, how to live, and how to direct our souls! She used to say, 'Let us begin afresh every day!' How she would warm the tepid and rouse the negligent, for to her every heart was open. Alas, we can no more run to her as we used to do, saying, 'Let us go, let us go and see our sweetest mother!' Never more shall we read those letters dictated by the Holy Spirit; never more shall we be fed with the food of her familiar words, never never more! O holy mother! where is now that place in my own home of Lecceto where you used to feed your sons with the pasture of your words;

alas, alas! we were not worthy of your presence! we shall never see you more!"[1]

Such are some of the words in which F. William has left recorded his love for his holy mistress, and they need no comment. Among the other brethren of Lecceto who regarded themselves as her spiritual sons must be named, besides B. Anthony of Nizza, a certain F. Felix, of Massa, of the noble house of Tancredi, who is numbered among the Beati of Lecceto, and who accompanied the Saint on her journey to Avignon; and F. Jerome of Siena, to whom Catherine dictated a letter in ecstasy. This letter we shall quote on account of its singular beauty, both of teaching and language. If we are to gather from it any idea of the character of him to whom it was addressed, we should conclude that F. Jerome was a tender and loving soul, somewhat addicted to sadness and to a too sensitive affection towards his friends. Catherine seeks therefore to win him to an exclusive love of God, the only worthy object of our tenderness, in Whom, as she says, "nothing is wanting. Know then, my son Jerome," she continues, "we must be stripped of the love of self, and of the love of the world, and of all sadness; for sadness dries up the soul and hinders us from knowing the infinite goodness of God. For when a soul contemplates its Creator and His goodness it cannot help loving Him, and would rather die than do anything contrary to Him whom it loves. We love what He loves, and hate what He hates, because love makes us one with Himself. And this love and this desire inspire us with a *passion* for the Eternal Truth, so that we cannot love anything but Jesus crucified. Think how our Lord delivered Himself for us on the tree of the Cross, as though His love for us was an intoxication,

[1] The above passages do not in the original follow one another consecutively, but are scattered in various parts of the voluminous and verbose panegyric which fills seventy-two closely-written pages. It has been a work of labour to sift the soil and extract the golden grains, which, when found, however, well repay the trouble expended on the search. I have also thrown in a few sentences extracted from F. Flete's letter to F. Raymund, preserved in MS. in the same library. For a further account of our illustrious countryman and his writings, see Appendix B.

a folly! *This* is the pasch I desire to eat with you. Now, then, understand what I say. I know you love the creature only spiritually, in God. But sometimes from one cause or another, as you know very well, we love spiritually, but find in this affection a pleasure and a joy, so that our less spiritual nature finds its part also. If you ask me how you can detect when this is, I reply, 'If you see that the person beloved fails you in anything, is no longer on the same terms with you, or seems to love another better than you, and if then you are chagrined and disturbed, and your own love grows less in consequence, *then be sure your affection is imperfect.* The Eternal Truth once said to one[1] of His servants, 'Daughter, act not as those who draw a vessel full of water out of a fountain, and drink from it when they have taken it out; the vessel is soon emptied, and they do not see it. But you, when you fill the vessel of your soul, making of your affection only one thing with the love with which you love Me, you will not withdraw the vessel from Me, who am the true Fountain of living water; but you will preserve in it the creature you love, as you keep the vessel in the fountain; and drinking from it there, it will never be emptied. And so neither you nor the creature you love will be ever empty, but you will always be filled with Divine grace, and so will never fall into trouble and regret. He who loves in this way when he sees one whom he loves change, and perhaps avoid him, does not trouble himself, for he loved his friend for God and not for himself, though indeed he may naturally feel a certain emotion when he sees himself separated from what he loves. Such is the rule I would have you follow if you would be perfect, and may you ever abide in the sweet and holy love of God!" (No. 132.)

Lecceto still exists much as it was in St. Catherine's time. A well, the waters of which she is said to have blessed and rendered drinkable, is still shown, with the ancient oak near the door of the church where the first hermits hung their bell. In the portico may still be seen the fine old paintings of heaven and hell, the works of mercy, and the Seven Sacraments, which date as far

[1] Herself, of course.

back as 1343, and are by a pupil of Ambrogio Lorenzetti. The place now belongs to the Seminary of Siena. Fifteen of the choral books of the brethren may be seen in the Communal Library of Siena, adorned with beautiful miniatures, which seem to indicate that the good hermits were lovers of art. At St. Leonard's, or, the Hermitage of the Lake,[1] nothing now remains but the church, the convent having been wantonly destroyed in 1783 by the family who bought the place on the expulsion of the hermits. The church however was spared, and contains some precious frescoes; and under it is a cave or subterranean vault in which the blessed Agostino Novello is said to have lived for the greater part of his life, doing penance, and dying there in 1309. The spot was no doubt familiar enough to William Flete, who came to this place when he desired even more retirement than he could command at Lecceto. It is remarkable, however, that in spite of his efforts to bury himself in the wilderness and be hidden from the knowledge of men, the fame of F. William's sanctity reached his native land, where he was held in great reverence, and his opinions on certain matters had its weight, as we shall see hereafter, even in the councils of the realm. He is said by Landucci to have foretold the apostacy of the English nation from the faith, and is numbered by him among the illustrious men of his Order.

These, then, were some of Catherine's disciples, for it would take us too long to enumerate them all. How dear they were to the Saint and she to them may be judged by their words and hers; she prayed for them continually, one by one and by name, and in her Dialogue she recommends them all to God in a touching prayer: "O Lord," she says, "I pray for all those whom Thou hast given me, whom I love, with a special love, and whom

[1] The lake from which this hermitage derives its name received the waters of the Bruna, to keep which within their assigned bounds the Sienese constructed a wall, the remains of which still exist. The lake, however, burst its boundary and overflowed the country round, causing much loss of men and cattle. It was into this dangerous lake that Peter Ventura once rode his horse by accident, and was delivered, as he states in the Processus, by invoking St. Catherine. It is now dried up, and the land it occupied is brought into cultivation.

Thou hast made one thing with me. For they are my consolation, and for Thy sake I desire to see them running in the sweet and narrow way, dead to self-will and pure from all judgment and murmuring against their neighbour. O sweetest Love! let not the enemy snatch any of them from my hands, but may all attain to Thee, O Eternal Father, to Thee who art their final end!"[1] And she received an intimation that this prayer on behalf of her children was indeed granted.

[1] Dialogo, ch. viii.

CHAPTER XIII

Catherine's Portrait

WHO does not know the value which attaches to a genuine portrait? Could such be found of the saints we love the best, we feel that the silent study of their features would help to put us in communication with their souls, and that we should know and understand them better if we could but once set them before us in their living natural reality. It is often our misfortune that the very veneration which the saints inspire in their biographers, makes war on the fidelity with which their characters are transmitted to us; by which I do not mean (as the reader may well believe) to throw discredit on the miraculous facts which are delivered to us regarding them; but only that there is a way of presenting us with the extraordinary, which conceals from us the everyday reality; we learn something of the saint or the heroine at the sacrifice of knowing little or nothing of the woman. It is a vice which in its degree attaches to most biographies, in which the ordinary rule seems to hold good of regarding as a disrespect to the persons who are their subjects, anything which sets them on a level with ourselves, and displays them to us in their everyday aspect of flesh and blood. No greater error can surely be committed, and specially in treating of God's saints. The tie between them and their votaries is perhaps the sublimest form of friendship. We do not merely venerate, but we love them; and we desire to love, not abstractions, but realities. No fear that we shall venerate them less because we know them as they were; no fear that we can be the losers by becoming familiar with their countenances, the tone of their voice, their ordinary ways, gestures,

and phrases; with their human infirmities, if such they had; or with a thousand things which may be trifles to an indifferent eye, but which to those who truly love reveal the character and the heart.

Willingly would we present our readers with the *Vera effigies* of our beloved Mother. That which stands as the frontispiece of this volume is probably the nearest approach which can now be given of a true portrait. Two likenesses exist of St. Catherine of Siena; one is the celebrated painting by Andrea di Vanni, which has already been spoken of; the other is the almost equally celebrated marble bust which claims to be the work of Jacobo della Quercia, and to have been carved by him from a cast taken after death. A careful comparison of these two portraits will show certain points of general resemblance. In both we observe the length of the nose, the great width of the head at the line of the eyes, and the distinctly cut chin. In both there are indications of a magnificent development of that portion of the head which rises above the eyebrows. In the profile of the bust we observe also that straight line from the top of the forehead to the extremity of the nose, which gives a certain classic character to the features. Add the *attitude* of the head, gently but not extravagantly bent, the attitude at once of meekness and of thought, and you will recognise the general outlines which seem to have been faithfully reproduced by Francesco Vanni, the author of the engraving of which our frontispiece is a fac-simile. Gaze at it, dear reader, and bear in mind that she whom it represents was never for a moment free from a wearing bodily pain; you will detect in it something of the languor of suffering, and of that calm tranquillity which no provocation ever disturbed; but do not call it sad, for those eyes could have rested on you with unutterable tenderness, and those lips could always command a smile which carried joy and comfort into the hearts of those who beheld it. Raymund tells us that the beauty of Catherine was not excessive. But few persons when they think of the saints represent them as possessed of that kind of beauty which can be depicted by the brush or the chisel. We think of them with the light of faith beaming from

their eyes, with purity on their smooth unruffled brows, and every feature sweetened by charity. We think of them as we think of our own mothers, who in the eyes and to the memory of their children are always beautiful; and we try to picture them as they were transfigured in moments of prayer and communion even before the eyes of men; a faint foreshadowing of that heavenly beauty which will rest on their countenances when we behold them standing in the eternal light.

Catherine always wore the habit of her Order, a white habit and veil, and a black mantle. In one of the narratives of her life she is represented as only wearing sandals on her feet. At her belt she carried her rosary, from which we have seen her breaking off the silver cross, to give it as an alms. It is a little singular to find that she always wore a ring, from which she also sometimes parted at the call of charity. It was a poor exterior enough, but scrupulously clean and neat, for in the matter of cleanliness, as in so many others, she resembled her father St. Dominic. Nor did the poverty of her dress conceal that air of majesty and power which made some say that they trembled when they gazed at her. Yet the pervading charm of her appearance was one which carried consolation into the saddest heart. "No one ever approached her," says Pius II. in the Bull of her Canonisation, "without departing from her wiser and better." And one of her disciples adds, "At her mere presence the temptations of the enemy disappeared; the sun in its meridian splendour does not more instantaneously scatter the darkness; . . . all the world recognised her as the image of the virtues, the perfect mirror of Christian purity. Never did I hear an idle word come forth from her lips, but she turned all things, even those most trifling, to our spiritual profit."[1]

Those of her disciples[2] who wrote their impressions of her in verse while she was yet living, have multiplied phrases which give us to understand how irresistible was her power over their hearts. "She draws souls as the magnet draws iron," they say, "always

[1] Stephen Maconi.

[2] Anastagio di Mont 'Altino and Jacomo del Pecora.

kind, always full of clemency. She keeps her eyes turned heavenwards, bathed in pious tears, while she is ready to pour out her heart's blood at the call of charity. . . . She is ever joyful and smiling, and counts her own sufferings as nothing; though she has always the sharp knife in her side, yet she makes light of it with her Spouse; and recreates herself cheerfully, praying the while for those who have need of pardon. . . . From the crown of her head to the sole of her feet she is full of Christ, and sings His glory day and night. . . . And when she names the sweet name of Mary, she seems wholly united to her. O dearest, sweetest, most venerable Mother, I see thee at the foot of the altar without so much as a drachm of life left in thee, yet rising in thy spirit to venerate thy Lord, and with thy countenance wholly transfigured! It is surely a seraph that I look upon, dyed in the Blood of the Lamb!" . . .

In fact, there was an ever springing fountain of joy in Catherine's heart which habitually found expression in her words and countenance. At times this joy could take the form of playfulness, and in the frank and happy intercourse which existed between her and her spiritual children there was nothing of restraint. They gathered about her and gave her the tenderest and most familiar titles; "*Nostra dolcissima mamma*" was the ordinary name by which they addressed her. However distant she might be from them, she followed them with her heart, we had almost said with her eyes, for all they did or thought lay open to her gaze. "Truly, Mother," said Stephen Maconi, "it is a dangerous thing to be near you, for you find out all our secrets." "My son," she replied, "know that in the souls God has confided to me, there is not so much as a speck or the shadow of a fault which He does not show me."

She was never idle; when not engaged in prayer or in works of charity for the souls and bodies of others, she was always to be found either reading or working. Burlamacchi bids us take notice of the thimble that was in the bag of eggs, mentioned in one of the anecdotes of her life, as a proof that she was accustomed to use her needle. But we know as much from other

circumstances. She mended and patched the mantle of her clothing, and made the vestments and altar linen of her chapel. In fact, she was skilful in all a woman's best accomplishments; she could wash and cook, make bread, or tend the sick, with those same hands that were to be sealed with the mysterious Stigmas.

Judging from her letters we should say that her reading was extensive for the times in which she lived, for she quotes not only from the Holy Scriptures, but from the Fathers, and the Lives of the Saints, and her illustrations betray a varied knowledge which it is not necessary to regard as all derived from supernatural sources. Ignatius Cantu asserts that she was familiar with the poetry of Dante; nor would this have been in any way surprising, for Dante was popular reading in the fourteenth century, and we have distinct evidence that he was studied by some of her disciples.[1] Although, therefore, no passage in her writings affords any evidence of the fact, it is quite possible that she may have been acquainted with the works of the great Florentine, who had visited Siena, and learnt in that city the terrible tidings of his exile and disgrace. That Catherine herself had some claim to the title of a poet is more certain; her first written composition is declared by the best Italian critics to be in verse; and she possessed all the other gifts which ordinarily accompany poetic genius; a great sense of natural beauty, and the habit of seeing in exterior forms the symbols of Divine truths. Hence one of her disciples tells us that "she sought God in all that she saw. I remember" (he says) "how when she saw the flowers in the meadows, she would say to us, 'See how all these things speak to us of God! Do not those red flowers remind us of the rosy wounds of our Jesus?' And if she saw an ant-hill she would say, 'Those little creatures came forth from the mind of God. He took as much care in creating the insects and the flowers as in creating the angels!' And when we heard her speak thus, we neglected everything to listen to her, and often even forgot so much as to eat, neither

[1] "*Se mi potete mandare quello pezo di Dante che vi lassai, si me lo mandate.*" —Letter from Gionta di Grazia to Neri Pagliaresi.

could we give a thought to our troubles or sufferings."[1] Of her love of flowers we have elsewhere spoken, and the singular skill she displayed in their arrangement. Some passages in her letters could hardly have been written by any one who was not a lover of flowers; nor must the reader think it too minute a criticism if we say that the flowers which furnished her with her favourite illustrations were no garden exotics, but the wild blossoms which flourish so abundantly in the woods and meadows around Siena.[2] Hear her describing our Lady as "the sweet field in which was sown the seed of the Divine word. In that sweet and blessed field of Mary,[3] the Word made flesh was like the grain which is ripened by the warm rays of the sun, and puts forth its flowers and fruit, letting its husk fall to the earth. It was so He did when, warmed by the fire of Divine Charity, He cast the seed of the Word into the field of Mary. O Blessed Mary! It was you who gave us the flower of our sweetest Jesus! That flower yielded its fruit on the Holy Cross, because there it was that we received the gift of perfect life; and it left its husk on the earth, even the will of the only Son of God, who desired nothing but the honour of His Father and our salvation."[4] But Catherine had not only a sense of natural, but even of artistic beauty. As a citizen of Siena, it would have been hard for her not to have inherited a taste which was as indigenous with the Sienese, as the oaks and olives in their soil. She had artists among her disciples, and she lived exactly at the time when painting, sculpture, and architecture were cultivated in their purest forms and their most religious spirit. From her infancy she had daily frequented the

[1] Letter of Stephen Maconi.

[2] "Under the shade of these woods may be found three kinds of the anemone, the hellebore, lilies, geraniums, veronicas, and potentillas, also eight species of orchis. . . . Of the multiplicity of plants which are to be found growing wild in the meadows, *not a few are the admiration of flower fanciers*. . . . Some of the trees, natives of these parts, produce an odoriferous wood."—*Siena e il suo territorio*, 1862.

[3] *Ego flos campi.*—Cant. ii. 1.

[4] Letter 46. The *husk;* in the original, *guscio.* St. Bernard uses the same expression, but applies it to the Blessed Sacrament, *cortex sacramenti.* See Harphius, *Theol. mys. Lib.* 1, p. 2, chap. liv.

church which boasted and still boasts of possessing the greatest artistic treasure of Siena.[1] She was no stranger to the works then being actively carried on by the *Opera del Duomo*, and in her many visits to the hospital of La Scala[2] she must have seen the glorious cathedral growing under the hands of the workmen, directed as they were by the choicest artists of the age. A passage occurs in one of her letters to Nicolas d'Osimo in which we seem to behold her watching the builders at their work, and giving to all she saw a spiritual interpretation. "Is there anything better or sweeter for us," she says, "than to build the edifice of our soul? But to do so we must find the stone, and the architect, and the workman. Oh! how good an architect is the Eternal Father! in whom dwell the treasures of infinite wisdom. He is *He who is*, and all things that are proceed from Him. . . . He has given His Son as the foundation-stone of our edifice, which is based on Him and cemented by His Blood. . . . Then the Father, considering all things in His wisdom, power, and goodness, *has made Himself the artist*, creating and building our souls in His own image and likeness. *The artist works by the power that is in him; by his memory, in which are the forms of all that he desires to produce; with his understanding which comprehends, and with the hand of his will which executes.* Now when we had lost grace by sin the Eternal Word came to unite Himself to our nature; He made Himself the artist, and even the Stone of our soul, as St. Paul says, 'The rock is Christ.' Yea, and He made Himself the workman also, and the builder of the edifice, for in His charity He has given us His life and His blood, as a builder mixes the lime and prepares the cement, so that nothing may be wanting. Let us rejoice then and give Him thanks that we have

[1] The celebrated painting of the Madonna, by Guido of Siena, which is in the Church of San Domenico, and which, according to the inscription attached to it, claims to have been painted in 1221, that is, nineteen years anterior to the birth of Cimabue; a claim which, if established, would give to Siena the honour of founding a school of art earlier than that of Florence. Since the year 1859, however, critics have been found to question the real date of the inscription, and have so thrown doubt on this venerable tradition.

[2] The hospital occupies one side of the Piazza del Duomo.

so good an architect, so excellent a stone, and a workman who gives His own blood for the cement of our edifice, and makes it so firm and strong that neither hail, nor wind, nor tempest can overthrow it unless we give our consent." (Letter 40.)

This singular passage is certainly not a hastily-written collection of far-fetched metaphors. When the Saint beheld the Eternal Father, as the Great Artist, creating our souls in His own image and likeness; and goes on to describe every human artist as drawing out of his memory the forms which he desires to produce, she evinced a comprehension of the real nature of art as exact as it is profound, and explains what we mean when, in a certain loose sense, we attribute to the true artist something of the creative faculty. He draws from within the ideas of those forms which he outwardly fashions; even as the Eternal Word, the First and Mighty Artist, possesses within Himself the archetypes of all created forms.

Catherine then, as we judge from this passage, was a lover of art, and understood its meaning. Of her musical taste, and of the traces it has left in her writings, we have elsewhere spoken. She had a sweet voice, that "excellent thing in woman," and often recreated herself with singing, and lastly, she had that most bewitching of gifts, a grace and facility in speaking, so that those who listened to her were never weary; but again and again declare in their depositions that they could have listened to her for ever.

We cannot now reproduce the charm of that eloquence which owed half its magic to the tones that uttered it, and the living energy from which it flowed. We have nothing but dead written pages which bear the same relation to the spoken word as does a lifeless picture to the living countenance which it portrays. Yet taking her letters in our hands and putting from us for the moment all thought of her supernatural gifts, we are overwhelmed, both with the extraordinary beauty of her language, and the amazing compass of her mind. You rise from their perusal fresh and vigorous, as though you had been brought in contact with an intellect whose predominant features were its strong good sense,

its absolute freedom from affectation, and a certain straightforward clearness, which is sometimes tinged with a sense of humour, a thing indeed inseparable from genius; and we hold it certain that apart from all supernatural illumination Catherine was a woman of true genius, and one not often surpassed. Her mysticism always has a daylight about it, and is expressed with such lucidity, that after reading in the Dialogo her explanation of the different kinds of ecstasies, their whole phenomena appear to be rendered comprehensible even to the most ordinary intelligence. Then her mind was possessed of an exquisite skill in adaptation and an almost endless variety in its powers of illustration. I will not say that we never find her repeating herself, or that there is not a frequent recurrence of the same words, phrases, and reflections; but for all that, her style is never "cut and dried;" she does not write to a monk as to a man of the world, or to a noble lady as to one of her own sisters. She always remembers some little circumstance in the position or history or character of those whom she addresses, and introduces it with a happy grace. Thus in writing to the King of France, she does not forget his surname of "the Wise;" in addressing another prince, she remembers that he is a descendant of St. Louis; to the knight and the man of arms she can discourse of lances, spurs, and even of war-steeds, and to the man of science of mirrors and the stars.

Catherine had a true vein of enthusiasm in her; a noble word could fire her, and set her in a glow. Thus we understand the animation she displays whenever she names the holy war, and that ardent desire which she shared with St. Dominic of laying down her life for God. F. Bartholomew Dominic tells us that sometimes when they were speaking together, she would point to her white habit and exclaim, "Ah, how lovely it would be if it were dyed red with blood for the love of Jesus!" This enthusiasm was accompanied with a certain energy, almost vehemence, of expression when there was question of the offence of God. Her intense faith realised in so sensible a manner that the Church was the Body of Christ, and that the Pope was His Vicar, that those who set themselves to divide and contemn the

Church and its appointed Head were to her, by a rigorous logic, members of the evil one; and she expressed this by calling them "incarnate devils." So too, regarding priests, as by their office, earthly angels, she did not shrink from telling those who degraded their high dignity that they were not men, but demons. To appreciate such language aright we must measure it by the faith out of which it sprang, and if after so doing there still seem something of excess, this, it is to be presumed, is no more than to say that she was a real woman, and not a shadowless ideal. "She spoke the truth openly," says William Flete, "and where God's honour was concerned, she never cared about pleasing or displeasing any one." In her very prayers there appeared the same amazing energy, when she wrestled with God for the grace of pardon for some hardened sinner, "with strong crying and tears, and groanings unutterable," watering the ground even with a bloody sweat, her whole frame shaken, and as it were, torn to pieces with a mysterious agony.[1]

But we have not yet made acquaintance with the real Catherine; to do so we must try and set before our minds what she was to the poor sinful souls whom she rescued out of their misery by thousands and tens of thousands. Who shall find words with which to depict that great sea of charity, whose ample floods were ever pouring forth their tide for the salvation of sinners? In this too she was the true daughter of that great and glorious Father whose habitual ejaculation in his hours of prayer was, "What will become of sinners!" To quote once more the words of Anastagio di Mont' Altino, which are precious from their unmistakable genuineness: "You may see her kindly and suppliantly embracing now this sinner and now that; she takes them by the hand, and calls them to her if they would hide themselves from her, and if any conceal his thought, or is silent about

[1] F. Ambrose Ansano Tantucci, in his notes on the Supplement, has thought it necessary to say a word to justify these and other exterior signs of Catherine's emotions from the charge of excess, and he refers to St. Thomas, who speaks of the violence caused at times by the movements of the Holy Spirit.—St. Th. 2da., 2dæ., Quest. 175, arts. 1., 2.

it, she knows it nevertheless; and if it is evil she bids him drive it away. . . . Her words were like thieves which snatched souls from the world and drew them to Holy Mother Church. She stood like a rock, all joyous and transformed in the likeness of her Spouse, and turned on us her pure vermilion countenance irradiated by that Sun; then, bathed in tears, she would reprove our sins, and teach us the bitter price at which the soul is cleansed."

What is here conveyed in the language of poetry is repeated by others in sober prose. When any sought her presence weighed down by the sense of sin, and feeling incapable to achieve their own deliverance, she welcomed them to her heart as a sister would welcome a long-lost brother; she lavished on them a tenderness which she drew out of that heart which God had given her, the Heart of Christ with which her own had become identified. She would not hear of the misgivings of fear or the despair of pardon. But she would bid them lay their sins and their penalties on her shoulders, and think of nothing but reconciling themselves with God. Her beautiful soul, stainless as the driven snow, came in contact with every hideous form of sin, and it is not to be doubted that the contact was an agony. The presence of sin made itself sensible to her exquisite organisation, as an insupportable and pestilential odour, yet she never shrank from sinners. The hardened and impenitent indeed she knew how to reprove and even to terrify, but there was no depth of iniquity from which she ever turned away if there was any hope of winning it to better things. Thus, besides the unnumbered conversions which she effected among criminals of every class, she did not refuse to seek out the most abandoned of her own sex, and to use her most winning eloquence in order to touch their hearts. We read how one night she returned to herself after a long abstraction in prayer, in which it had been made known to her that a certain woman in the neighbourhood, fearing the anger of her husband whom she had betrayed, was on the point of committing suicide. She at once sent two of her companions to Fontebranda, desiring them to find the woman out and bring her

so good an architect, so excellent a stone, and a workman who gives His own blood for the cement of our edifice, and makes it so firm and strong that neither hail, nor wind, nor tempest can overthrow it unless we give our consent." (Letter 40.)

This singular passage is certainly not a hastily-written collection of far-fetched metaphors. When the Saint beheld the Eternal Father, as the Great Artist, creating our souls in His own image and likeness; and goes on to describe every human artist as drawing out of his memory the forms which he desires to produce, she evinced a comprehension of the real nature of art as exact as it is profound, and explains what we mean when, in a certain loose sense, we attribute to the true artist something of the creative faculty. He draws from within the ideas of those forms which he outwardly fashions; even as the Eternal Word, the First and Mighty Artist, possesses within Himself the archetypes of all created forms.

Catherine then, as we judge from this passage, was a lover of art, and understood its meaning. Of her musical taste, and of the traces it has left in her writings, we have elsewhere spoken. She had a sweet voice, that "excellent thing in woman," and often recreated herself with singing, and lastly, she had that most bewitching of gifts, a grace and facility in speaking, so that those who listened to her were never weary; but again and again declare in their depositions that they could have listened to her for ever.

We cannot now reproduce the charm of that eloquence which owed half its magic to the tones that uttered it, and the living energy from which it flowed. We have nothing but dead written pages which bear the same relation to the spoken word as does a lifeless picture to the living countenance which it portrays. Yet taking her letters in our hands and putting from us for the moment all thought of her supernatural gifts, we are overwhelmed, both with the extraordinary beauty of her language, and the amazing compass of her mind. You rise from their perusal fresh and vigorous, as though you had been brought in contact with an intellect whose predominant features were its strong good sense,

its absolute freedom from affectation, and a certain straightforward clearness, which is sometimes tinged with a sense of humour, a thing indeed inseparable from genius; and we hold it certain that apart from all supernatural illumination Catherine was a woman of true genius, and one not often surpassed. Her mysticism always has a daylight about it, and is expressed with such lucidity, that after reading in the Dialogo her explanation of the different kinds of ecstasies, their whole phenomena appear to be rendered comprehensible even to the most ordinary intelligence. Then her mind was possessed of an exquisite skill in adaptation and an almost endless variety in its powers of illustration. I will not say that we never find her repeating herself, or that there is not a frequent recurrence of the same words, phrases, and reflections; but for all that, her style is never "cut and dried;" she does not write to a monk as to a man of the world, or to a noble lady as to one of her own sisters. She always remembers some little circumstance in the position or history or character of those whom she addresses, and introduces it with a happy grace. Thus in writing to the King of France, she does not forget his surname of "the Wise;" in addressing another prince, she remembers that he is a descendant of St. Louis; to the knight and the man of arms she can discourse of lances, spurs, and even of war-steeds, and to the man of science of mirrors and the stars.

Catherine had a true vein of enthusiasm in her; a noble word could fire her, and set her in a glow. Thus we understand the animation she displays whenever she names the holy war, and that ardent desire which she shared with St. Dominic of laying down her life for God. F. Bartholomew Dominic tells us that sometimes when they were speaking together, she would point to her white habit and exclaim, "Ah, how lovely it would be if it were dyed red with blood for the love of Jesus!" This enthusiasm was accompanied with a certain energy, almost vehemence, of expression when there was question of the offence of God. Her intense faith realised in so sensible a manner that the Church was the Body of Christ, and that the Pope was His Vicar, that those who set themselves to divide and contemn the

Church and its appointed Head were to her, by a rigorous logic, members of the evil one; and she expressed this by calling them "incarnate devils." So too, regarding priests, as by their office, earthly angels, she did not shrink from telling those who degraded their high dignity that they were not men, but demons. To appreciate such language aright we must measure it by the faith out of which it sprang, and if after so doing there still seem something of excess, this, it is to be presumed, is no more than to say that she was a real woman, and not a shadowless ideal. "She spoke the truth openly," says William Flete, "and where God's honour was concerned, she never cared about pleasing or displeasing any one." In her very prayers there appeared the same amazing energy, when she wrestled with God for the grace of pardon for some hardened sinner, "with strong crying and tears, and groanings unutterable," watering the ground even with a bloody sweat, her whole frame shaken, and as it were, torn to pieces with a mysterious agony.[1]

But we have not yet made acquaintance with the real Catherine; to do so we must try and set before our minds what she was to the poor sinful souls whom she rescued out of their misery by thousands and tens of thousands. Who shall find words with which to depict that great sea of charity, whose ample floods were ever pouring forth their tide for the salvation of sinners? In this too she was the true daughter of that great and glorious Father whose habitual ejaculation in his hours of prayer was, "What will become of sinners!" To quote once more the words of Anastagio di Mont' Altino, which are precious from their unmistakable genuineness: "You may see her kindly and suppliantly embracing now this sinner and now that; she takes them by the hand, and calls them to her if they would hide themselves from her, and if any conceal his thought, or is silent about

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with them to her; they obeyed, and were in time to prevent the dreadful deed; and by means of Catherine's prudent interference the scandal was put an end to, and the husband and wife were reconciled. "Listen to me, beloved daughter," she writes to another unhappy outcast, "if you will but cast away your sins by a holy confession, and a firm resolution to return to them no more, the tender goodness of God has already spoken the word, 'I will no more remember thy offences.' It is true, those who here expiate their sins by penance He will not punish in the next life. Surely it cannot be hard to you to have recourse to our sweet Mother Mary, the Mother of compassion and of mercy. She will lead you into the presence of her Son, and showing Him the breasts that nourished Him in His infancy, she will move Him to show you mercy, and then like a daughter and a slave redeemed by His Blood, you will enter within His Wounds, and the fire of His ineffable charity will consume all your miseries and wash away all your faults. He will make a bath of His own Blood in which to purify you; believe it well; our sweetest Lord will not despise you if you come to Him." (Letter 373.)

With words like these did this soul of unspotted purity address itself to those encrusted with the filth of vice. Often enough her presence sufficed without her words to pierce them with compunction and draw them weeping to her feet. Nor is this to be wondered at; for the true servant of God is a tabernacle in which is ever dwelling the hidden Christ. As the priest who bears the Holy Mysteries to the dying, carries through the unconscious crowds the presence of One who is among them and they know it not, and who yet, little as they suspect it, is diffusing, it may be a grace and a blessing as He passes by; so the faithful soul united to her God is a true Ciborium, and bears His Presence into the world that forgets Him, and sheds around her the perfume of His charity. In this indwelling presence of God in the soul lies the true power of sanctity, for it is not the poor fallen child of Adam who effects in another soul its resurrection to a life of grace, but, "the Spirit of Christ that worketh in her." Hence it is that the saints, and Catherine among the rest, did

far more by their prayers than their exhortations. What they did they did in virtue of their union with God, like the little child whose fingers indeed hold the pencil, which is nevertheless guided by the master's hand. And this is to be remembered lest any should mistake the significance of those narratives in which Catherine is presented to us, converting souls by her mere presence; for such marvels are not told of her "as though wrought by her own strength or power,"[1] but rather to glorify Him who made her heart His abode, and thence sent forth the rays of His power, as from a Tabernacle.

Here, then, is a rude and imperfect outline of the portrait of St. Catherine, as we see her standing surrounded by her disciples. We could not, when sketching that little group, omit the central figure; and now, perhaps, we shall better understand their mutual relations. Glancing over the names and quality of her devoted followers, we see how greatly her acquaintance with the state of society, both in Siena and elsewhere, must through their means have become extended. Vanni, for example, had visited the Court of Avignon, and could tell her something of the condition of affairs in that luxurious capital; and the longing eagerness for the restoration of the Holy See to Italian soil, which had prompted his journey, found a ready echo in her heart. From the Tolomei and the Malevolti and other noble families she must have become familiar with many a history of family feud and civil discord; while the Friars, who, like F. Bartholomew, were going hither and thither preaching and giving missions, would bring back sad and terrible tales of the spiritual desolation which they found in the scenes of their ministrations, and the scandals that had penetrated even into the sanctuary. What kind of reports could those have been which Bartholomew brought from his long sojourn at Asciano; and which prompted her to dictate a letter to Berenger dei Arzocchi, the parish priest of that place, in which she hints at ecclesiastics who out of avarice sell spiritual graces, and spend their money in feasting and fine equipages; and that other letter addressed to the parish priest of Semignano which is probably

[1] Acts iii. 12.

the most terrific castigation an unworthy minister of the altar ever received from the lips of man or woman?

From men of business and of the world, like Christofano and Master Matthew, she must have heard much of the ruin of families, and the stagnation of trade caused by those "rapacious locusts," the roving Free Companies, and the danger constantly threatening the safety and prosperity of peaceable citizens. Yet existing authorities, whether civil or ecclesiastical, seemed powerless to apply any remedy to all these frightful evils, and Catherine, as she poured out her soul in prayer for her country which she loved like a true Italian, and for the Church of God which she regarded as none other than the Sacred body of her Divine Spouse, must often have cried out in the language of the prophets: "How long shall I see men fleeing away, and hear the voice of the trumpet? How long shall the land mourn, and the herb of every field wither? Woe to the pastors that devour and tear the sheep of the pasture! For behold! the city of Thy sanctuary is become a desert: Sion is a waste, and Jerusalem is desolate. And the house of our holiness and of our glory where our fathers praised Thee is burned with fire, and all our lovely things are turned to ruins."[1]

But before the great thoughts which were working in her soul could begin to be accomplished, she herself was to be subjected to a new discipline of persecution. "When God would exalt a work," says Saint Vincent of Paul, "He first humbles the workman;" and the wonderful career of Catherine of Siena offered no exception to this Divine law. Let us see in what manner this came about, and admire the Providence which watches over Its chosen ones, and guards the souls most richly gifted by grace, from "the moth of pride," by covering them over with "the black garment of humiliation."

[1] Jer. iv. 21, xii. 4, xxiii. 1; Isa. lxiv. 10, 11.

CHAPTER XIV

The Strife of Tongues, 1372

IN the beginning of the year 1372 Catherine received from our Lord the intimation that the wonders of her life were about yet further to increase. The promise of graces greater than any she had hitherto enjoyed was accompanied by a warning that the prodigies which God was about to work in her would give rise to murmurs on the part of men, and of some even of her own followers. Hers was not intended to be a merely splendid career in the judgment of the world, nor one the sufferings of which should be sweetened by the love and confidence of all good souls. Like her Divine Master she was to be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence even to her own brethren.

"One day," says Raymund, "as she was praying in her little chamber, our Lord appeared to her, and announced to her the new kind of miracle He was about to operate in her. 'Dear daughter,' He said, 'henceforth thy life will be full of prodigies so amazing as that ignorant and sensual men will refuse to believe them. Many even of those who are now attached to thee will doubt thee, and believe thee to be deceived. My grace infused into thy soul shall overflow into thy body also, and thou shalt experience its effects, and no longer be able to live, save in a manner wholly extraordinary. Thou shalt be exposed to many labours, and gain many souls, but thy conduct will scandalise many, and they will contradict and publicly accuse thee. Nevertheless, fear nothing; I will be ever with thee, and will deliver thee from the tongue that speaketh falsely. Follow with courage the path that I shall show thee, and by thy means I will save many souls from

hell, and conduct them to My kingdom.' Catherine listened with reverence, and when she heard the words repeated, 'Fear nothing, for I am with thee,' she answered humbly, 'Thou art my God, and I Thy little handmaid; may Thy holy will be accomplished in all things, only forsake me not, but incline to my assistance.'"

When the vision had ended, she reflected within herself what change it should be that was thus graciously announced to her. And she became sensible of such an increase of spiritual grace as had for its inevitable result a yet further suspension of all her natural powers. At length it pleased God to inspire her with the thought of receiving as often as she could the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, in which she might be granted the fruition of her love, not so as she would enjoy it in the bliss of heaven, yet so as to satisfy her in some sort during her time of exile. With the permission of her confessor, therefore, she began to communicate almost daily,[1] unless hindered by sickness; and when unable from any cause to do this she suffered so greatly as to be even in danger of death. Moreover, this heavenly food satisfied and supported not only her soul, but her body also; so that ordinary food became no longer necessary to her, and the attempt to swallow it was attended by extraordinary sufferings. This fact seemed to her family and those about her so incredible, that they readily enough decided it was a deceit of the enemy, and her confessor ordered her to take food daily, and give no heed to any visions which might seem to prescribe the contrary. She obeyed, as she invariably did, but the obedience reduced her to such a state that they feared for her life. Then he examined her and drew from her the fact that the Blessed Sacrament so satisfied her as that she neither desired nor was able to take any other food; nay, that the mere presence of the Blessed Sacrament, or of the priest who was privileged to touch It, in some sort refreshed her and supported her bodily strength. As he still hesitated, in doubt what to think, Catherine said to him with her customary sweetness and respect, "Father, I would ask you to tell me one

[1] Raymund distinctly says she did not actually communicate every day, though this was currently reported.—Leg., Part 2, ch. xi.

thing: in case I should kill myself by over-fasting, should I not be guilty of my own death?" "Yes," said he. "Again," said she, "I beseech you resolve me in this: which do you take to be a greater sin, to die by over-eating or by over-abstinence?" "By over-eating, of course," he replied. "Then," she continued, "as you see by experience that I am very weak, and even at death's door by reason of my eating, why do you not forbid me to eat, as you would forbid me to fast in the like case?" To that he could make no answer; and, therefore, seeing by evident tokens that she was near the point of death, he concluded by saying: "Daughter, do as God shall put in your mind, follow the guidance of His Holy Spirit, and pray for me; for I see the things that our Lord works in you are not to be measured by the common rule."

The account which Raymund has given in his Legend is confirmed by the testimony of many of her disciples. Caffarini, who often sat with her at table, says that she forced herself to swallow a few herbs, but that it cost her such pain that she used to call it "going to execution," and was obliged afterwards to reject whatever she had taken. He says he had seen the green twigs she introduced into her throat for that purpose. Francis Malevolti, who on one occasion spent four consecutive months in her company, gives a precisely similar account both of her efforts to eat and the suffering it occasioned. The anonymous author of the *Miracoli*, who wrote during her lifetime, says that this extraordinary kind of life began with her so far back as the year 1370; and speaks as follows: This holy virgin always has with her two or three Sisters who wear the same habit, and who never leave her; and not for her own consolation, but theirs, she sits down with them to table. Her companions do not eat meat, but only herbs, vegetables and fruit, with bread and wine, and other coarse food, cooked or raw. She takes something into her mouth, according to what may be on the table, sometimes a morsel of bread as big as a nut, sometimes a leaf of salad, or an almond, or other such things, and in like quantities. She swallows nothing that she puts into her mouth, but when she has masticated it,

rejects it into a little vessel, rinsing her mouth with some cold water. And this she does only once in the day." Stephen Maconi gives the same account, and says that she usually waited till the others had finished to take even this small amount of nourishment, saying gaily, "Now, let us go and do justice on the miserable sinner." Often the artificial means she was obliged to use to reject what she had swallowed caused her to vomit an abundance of blood.

Sometimes her confessor would compassionate her, and advise her to let men talk, and not to torture herself by the effort to eat. "No, no," she would say; "it is better to expiate my sins here. I ought not to shun the occasion which God gives me of making satisfaction for them in this life. If we did but know how to use His grace, we should profit from everything. Whether in favourable events or in contradictions, we should always say, 'I must reap something from this.' Did we but do this we should soon be very rich."[1]

This strange and unwonted manner of life gave matter of great offence to most of her friends. "They were in the valley," says Raymund, "and they presumed to judge concerning what was on the summit of the mountain." Some accused her of pride, as seeking to appear better than our Lady and the apostles, nay, even than our Divine Lord Himself, whom Holy Scripture declares did indeed both eat and drink. Others alleged the rules of spiritual life which forbid religious persons to practise any singularity. Some said that all virtue is in the mean, and all extremes are to be suspected. And others again in plain terms declared she was a mere hypocrite, who made up for the denial she practised in public by plenty of good cheer in secret. If any of these slanders reached her ears, or were uttered in her presence, Catherine would reply with unruffled sweetness and patience. "It is true indeed," she would say, "that our Lord sustains my life without food, but I know not why this should offend you. Truly I would eat with a good will if I could. But Almighty God for my sins has laid on me this strange kind of

[1] Legend, Part 2, ch. iv.

infirmity, so that if I eat, I am forthwith in peril of death. Pray for me therefore that He will vouchsafe to forgive me my sins, which are the cause of this and of every other evil."

Yet she did not fail to suffer intensely; for Catherine had by nature a keenly sensitive disposition, and the injurious suspicions which were daily expressed in her presence caused her a secret anguish. This was rendered yet more intense when she perceived that in spite of what had passed between them, her confessor himself began to waver. Caffarini tells the story in his Supplement, and relates how one morning, meeting F. Thomas, the Saint observed that he was preoccupied and troubled, and asked him what ailed him. He endeavoured to evade her question, but she, who knew all that was passing in his mind, refused to be so put off. "You may tell me without fear," she said, "for indeed I already know all about it." Then he told her the various things that were gossiped about the city, and how he began to fear that he had not the light requisite for guiding so extraordinary a case, or discerning by what spirit she was led. The Saint paused, and then with great humility replied: "Father, let me pray, and ask God to make us know if you have hitherto directed me aright or not;" and then she told him exactly who the persons were who had suggested his doubts, though she had never either seen or spoken to them. The night following she prayed, kneeling without any support and with such intense fervour that, though it was winter time, her person and the very floor of the room where she knelt were bathed in a profuse sweat. And even as she prayed, the trouble passed from the mind of her confessor, and her own soul too was filled with a wonderful calm and assurance. At break of day she sent for him, and bade him give thanks to God for delivering him from his doubt, adding, "When I saw that you, who know the very secrets of my heart, were beginning to doubt by what spirit I was led, I too began to doubt, and to entertain great fears, but God in His goodness has been pleased this night to reassure both you and me."

Still neither were the murmurs of the world silenced, nor did any change take place in her condition of body. One day, in the

month of September 1372, as she knelt weeping over her sins, our Lord appeared to her, and bidding her weep no more, extended His hand over her head, and pronounced the customary formula of absolution. For many days after she felt the touch of that Divine Hand, and the unspeakable joy of her soul was such, that from that date until the Feast of the Ascension in the year following—a space of nearly eight months—the suffering occasioned by the attempt to take food greatly increased. From September until Lent she could only retain the smallest quantity. From Ash Wednesday, which fell that year on the 8th of March, until Passion Sunday even this was impossible, and from Passion Sunday until Ascension Day, a space of fifty-five days, no kind of food passed her lips. And during the whole of that time she suffered incredible pain, yet neither her weakness nor her sufferings seemed to diminish her activity in all good works. For though she had become so feeble that those about her expected every hour to be her last, yet if there were any occasion for winning a soul to God, or doing any other good work for His glory, she would rise and go about without any sign of weariness.

A few days before the Feast of the Ascension her sufferings greatly increased, and believing herself unable to endure them much longer, she turned to God, saying, "O Lord, how long is it Thy blessed will that I should endure this torment?" And she was given to understand that it would cease on the coming Festival. During the three Rogation days her extreme state of weakness prevented her from going to the church and receiving Holy Communion, the only food which for two months had sustained her life. Caffarini says that our Lord took pity on her, and deigned that an angel should bring her the Sacred Host in a precious veil, which so comforted and refreshed her that she revived, but during those three days spake no word to any living creature. The rest of the story shall be told in the graphic words of F. Bartholomew. He says, that on going to see her the eve of the feast, he doubted if she would live till morning. "The bell rung for Compline and we all rose to depart. 'O Mother,' I said, 'are you about to leave us?' 'I know not,' she replied,

'but either I shall go to God, or, if I recover, I shall live in some unusual way.' At daybreak (May 25th, 1373) she called Alexia, saying, 'Give me my shoes and mantle.' Alexia, astonished but rejoicing, did as she was bid, and they went to the church together. Catherine went to Communion with the other Sisters and remained in ecstasy, making her thanksgiving till the brethren came into the church to finish grace after dinner, according to the custom of the Order. Having finished grace in choir, many went into the nave of the church to look at Catherine. Then rising from her prayer gay and joyful, she comforted them all by her sweet manner of receiving them. 'To-day is the feast of our Lord,' she said, 'I think our sweet Lord wishes me to eat with you to-day for your consolation.' These words filled them with joy, and six of the Friars went home with her, to dine with her at her own house, but as nothing had been provided, the brethren sent back to the convent for some beans dressed in oil that had been cooked for the community. They all then ate with her, rejoicing, and many devout people hearing what had happened rejoiced also; and coming in to visit her, she was obliged for their satisfaction to take food and wine several times in the course of that day."[1]

Nevertheless the hard judgments passed on her conduct did not cease. F. Bartholomew in his deposition mentions the letter written to her some time later by a certain person of high reputation for piety, named Elbianco, in which he remonstrated with her for her unusual manner of life. The letter fell into the hands of F. Raymund, who was at that time her confessor, and was by him shown to Bartholomew. Whilst they were conferring about it, Catherine observed their trouble and asked the cause. When she heard it she not unnaturally claimed her letter, and as they hesitated about giving it to her, she said, "If you will not give it to me, at least tell me what concerns me in it." Raymund

[1] We have followed the account of Caffarini and F. Bartholomew. If any one will compare their joint narratives with the brief and imperfect account given by Raymund in the Legend, it will be seen that they wrote as eye-witnesses, whereas he only gathered his information from hearsay.

accordingly read it to her. She listened calmly, and then gently reproved them both for the indignation they had expressed. "You ought," she said, "to thank him who has written me this letter. Do you not see that he has given me precious advice? He fears lest I should fall into the hands of the enemy, and wishes to warn me of my danger. I must have that letter, and shall certainly write and thank the author of it." In fact she did so; and seeing that Raymund was not convinced by her words, she gave him a severe look, and reproved them both for seeing evil where there was nothing but good.

Her reply is preserved,[1] and is as follows: "I thank you heartily, my dear Father (she says), for the zeal you have for my soul. It seems you are astonished at what you hear of my way of life, and I am sure you have no other motive than a desire for God's honour and my salvation, and that you fear for me lest I should be deceived by the enemy. This fear does not at all surprise me, and I assure you if you feel it, much more do I tremble for myself, so greatly do I dread the delusions of the evil one. Nevertheless, I trust in God's goodness, and I am on my guard against myself, knowing that from myself I can hope for nothing. I take refuge in the Cross of Jesus Christ, and fasten myself to it, being persuaded that so long as I am nailed there with the nails of love and humility, the devil cannot harm me; not for my merits, but for those of Jesus crucified.

"You tell me I ought to pray God that I may be able to eat; I assure you before God that I use every effort to do so, and that once or twice every day I force myself to take food. I have constantly prayed to God, and I do and will pray that He will grant me grace to live like other people, if such be His will. I assure you I have thoroughly examined this infirmity, and I think that in His goodness He must have sent it to correct me of the vice of gluttony. I deeply regret not having had strength enough to correct it from the motive of love. I do not know what remedy I can now make use of, but I would beg you to pray the Eternal Truth, if it be for His glory, that He would enable me

[1] No. 305.

once more to take food. I am sure He will not despise your prayers; and I entreat you to send me the remedy you name, and I will certainly try it. I would also ask you not to judge lightly of what you have not examined before God. I will conclude."

The gentle reproof contained in the last phrase of this humble letter must, we would hope, have touched the heart of the person to whom it was addressed.

But the trials to which the Saint was exposed from the hard judgment of others were by no means confined to their strictures on her abstinence from food. It has been said that at the same time that this suspension of her ordinary powers became more habitual, her longing for Holy Communion greatly increased. It grew in very truth to be the life of her life, the daily bread of body and soul. Most wonderful, indeed, are the things that are told us of the Communions of Catherine, and of the favours she at such times received. We do not speak of them in this place, as they will more fitly form the subject of a separate chapter.[1] It was not so much these mysterious favours which formed matter of criticism, as the frequency of her Communions; a point on which endless discussions arose, many even of her best friends withholding their approval. Among the Mantellate themselves there existed a strong difference of opinion on the subject. There are indications of a sort of jealousy which had sprung up about this time on the part of the elder Sisters against Catherine and her younger companions. Why should these young ones affect to be holier than their seniors? Who was Catherine Benincasa that she should gather disciples about her and set up for being a Saint? So the matter was carried to a director of the Tertiaries,

[1] In order to preserve the chronological order of Catherine's life, it has been thought best as a general rule not to introduce incidents attested by Raymund of Capua until we reach the period when he first became known to the Saint. It is the mixing up of facts which occurred before and after that time which has confused the order of events, as given to us in the Legend. On this account, therefore, we defer the subject of Catherine's favours in Holy Communion to a later chapter, in which will be thrown together the testimonies of all her confessors and disciples on this interesting subject.

whom Raymund does not name, but only calls "an unenlightened religious."[1] He sided with the malcontents, and this is less surprising when we remember that such frequent Communion was not then a common thing even with the devout. Soon both Friars and Sisters were split into two parties. The one affirmed that these frequent Communions were presumptuous, and tended to irreverence; whilst the other as warmly took Catherine's part. Father Thomas stoutly defended his penitent, and in reply to the arguments and censures which he daily had to encounter, appealed to the practice of the early Christians, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and to the authority of St. Denys the Areopagite, who declares that in the primitive Church the faithful communicated daily. His opponents were not at all disconcerted, but alleged on their side a saying attributed to St. Augustine,[2] "To communicate daily, I neither blame nor praise." When this was repeated to Catherine, and by no less a personage than a learned bishop, she listened with her usual sweetness, and gave the matter a pleasant turn by replying, "If St. Augustine does not blame me, my lord, why should you?" Her confessors, who were familiar with the doctrine of St. Thomas, that they who find in themselves an increase of devotion and reverence towards the most Holy Sacrament by frequent Communion may safely receive it oftener, gave testimony that in her case she did increase, as in devotion, so also in charity, humility, and godly patience: they said, too, that when hindered from Communion, she languished as one sick of some bodily infirmity. Yet for all that many of her own religious sisters were not afraid of using every effort to prevent her communicating, on the plea that it troubled the Fathers, that it gave offence, and other like pretences. On this matter, Raymund has made some sad and humiliating disclosures. It seems that some of the elder sisters, moved by their miserable

[1] This could not have been F. Bartholomew Montucci, who is generally spoken of as holding that office, a man of great piety, and one of Catherine's most devoted friends.

[2] In reality it is from Gennadius, *De Eccles. Dogm. in cap. quotid.* 13. *de consec. dis.* 2. See Liguori on Frequent Communion.

jealousy, so worked on the Prior of San Domenico, and certain of the friars who had espoused their side, that at last it was determined that Catherine should be deprived of Communion, and that the faithful confessor who had directed her for so many years with consummate prudence should be removed. When she next approached the altar rail, therefore, she was driven away before the eyes of the public, and obliged to retire in confusion. Catherine bore the trial with unruffled patience, and never uttered a word of bitterness or complaint. But this was not all. On the rare occasions when she was now permitted to communicate, they required her to finish her prayers directly and quit the church; a thing which was wholly impossible in her case, as she could never receive Communion without falling into an ecstasy, and remaining in that state some hours. The Fathers who had taken this affair into their hands seem to have considered it in the light of an intolerable nuisance. Low and vulgar minds will regard even the sublimest mysteries from a low and vulgar point of view. We can fancy the old sacristan fidgeting about with his keys in his hand, unable to shut the church doors because Catherine Benincasa was so long at her prayers. That was the limit of his view of the subject, and he found many among his brethren whose comprehension of the matter did not rise to a higher level than his own. So at last, one day, losing patience, they took her, all in ecstasy as she was, and carrying her off in a rough and brutal manner, they flung her out on a heap of rubbish outside the church doors, which they then proceeded to lock behind her. There she lay, cast out as if she had been some vile reptile, with her senses the while all rapt in God. Her companions, bathed in tears, gathered about her to protect her from the rays of the midday sun, and so waited the moment when she would return to herself. And this happened not once, but often.[1] At such times the passers-by would kick her contemptuously; one miserable woman satisfied her malice by kicking her in the church,

[1] This is clear from the Legend. Raymund gives several instances of persons, both men and women, who kicked and otherwise maltreated her, and of the judgments that fell on them.—See Leg., Part 3, chap. vi.

and then publicly boasted of what she had done. Catherine knew all this, but she never spoke of it except to excuse the authors of these strange excesses. One man, unhappily a religious, was not content with grossly insulting the Saint in the presence of her companions, but went so far as to take from her some money, bestowed on her for charitable purposes. Catherine gave not the smallest sign of trouble. She forbade her companions to speak evil of the miscreant, or to cause him any pain. She possessed her soul in patience, and by patience she at last overcame. Surely, in the sight of the angels, this is the sublimest page in Catherine's life. To many it is given, in a certain sense, to taste of the sufferings of their Divine Master, but comparatively few enjoy the privilege of sharing his humiliations. Catherine in her ecstasy, flung out of the church by rude hands, and lying in the broad thoroughfare under the scorching sun; kicked and spat upon by brutal men and spiteful women; but unmoved in her patience, always calm, always sweet, always silent; —what a spectacle is this! What a reflection of the ignominies of Jesus! And having reached that depth of profound abjection, can we wonder that she should soar upwards from it to the sublimest heights of charity?

About this time (probably towards the end of the year 1373),[1] Catherine became aware that an old woman named Andrea, herself one of the Sisters of Penance, was dying by inches of a terrible cancer. As her malady made progress it caused such disgust to those about her, that scarcely any one could be found to visit or tend upon her. When Catherine heard this, she understood that our Lord had reserved the poor forsaken sufferer for her loving care; and going to her at once with a cheerful countenance, she offered to remain with her and assist her as long as her illness might last. The charity thus generously

[1] Carapelli places it at the beginning of that year, but when we remember in what a condition Catherine then was, it seems more likely to have been some time after May. We consider then the events here alluded to as occupying the latter half of 1373 and the beginning of 1374, immediately before her first visit to Florence.

offered was as generously accomplished; day after day Catherine lavished on her patient the tenderest care; in spite of the repulsive nature of the services she had to perform, she never showed any sign of disgust or repugnance, or adopted any of those precautions which others had made use of in the tainted atmosphere of the sick-room, lest by doing so she should give pain to Andrea's feelings. Once when the intolerable stench almost overcame her courage, she reproached herself for this as for a weakness, and bending over the bed she even applied her lips to the wound, until she had triumphed over the revolt of nature. But wonderful to say, her charity elicited no gratitude from her who was its object. Andrea's ears had no doubt been poisoned by the malicious slanders before mentioned. The tongues of some of the Sisters had already been busy tearing in pieces Catherine's good name, and getting up a party among the friars against her and her confessor; and this explains the otherwise incomprehensible fact that the sick woman should have had her mind filled with the most injurious suspicions of the holy virgin. She persuaded herself that Catherine's heroic perseverance in doing what no one else would consent to do was part and parcel of her affectation of holiness, a would-be superiority to other people, for it was there that the devil of jealousy had found entrance among the Sisters; and at last her diseased fancies so completely blinded her that whenever Catherine was out of her sight she imagined her to be engaged in something sinful. Though Catherine knew well enough the judgment which Andrea passed on her, she did not show herself one whit less loving or serviceable than she had been before. But the more charity she bestowed, the more was the malice of the old woman stirred against her, so that not content with her unjust suspicions, she went so far as to communicate them to the other Sisters, to whom she accused Catherine as guilty of a breach of chastity.

The matter was too grave to be passed over without examination, and the Sisters, with their Prioress at their head, after questioning Andrea, summoned Catherine before them to answer to the charge. Catherine listened to their reproaches in humble

silence, and when she had to speak, said no more than these words, "Indeed, my good Mother and Sisters, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ I am a virgin!" And however much they pressed her she would give no other answer save again and again to repeat, "Indeed, I am a virgin." Then she went back to the author of this malicious slander, and waited on her humbly and charitably as before, yet not without feeling a pang in her heart when she thought of the infamy attributed to her. Retiring to her own chamber she opened her grief to Almighty God: "O Lord, my sweetest Spouse," she said, "Thou knowest what a tender and precious thing is the good name of those who have vowed their virginity to Thee; and Thou seest the efforts made by the father of lies to hinder me in this charitable work which Thou hast appointed me to do; help me therefore in my innocence, and suffer not the wicked serpent to prevail against me." When she had thus prayed a long time with many tears, our Lord appeared to her holding two crowns in His hands, one in His right hand of gold, all decked with precious stones, another in His left hand of very sharp thorns, and said these words to her: "Dear daughter, it is so, that thou must needs be crowned with these two crowns at sundry times; choose thou, therefore, whether thou wilt rather be crowned with the sharp crown of thorns in this life, and have that other reserved for thee in the life to come; or else, whether thou like better to have this goodly golden crown now, and that other sharp crown to be reserved for thee in the life to come?" To this demand the humble virgin made answer after this manner: "Lord," said she, "Thou knowest very well that I have resigned my will wholly to Thee, and have made a full resolution to do all things according to Thy direction; and therefore I dare not choose anything, unless I may know that the same shall stand with Thy most blessed will and pleasure. Nevertheless, because Thou hast willed me to make answer concerning this choice, that Thou hast here made unto me, I say thus: That I choose in this life to be evermore conformed and made like to Thee, my Lord and Saviour, and cheerfully to bear crosses and thorns for Thy love, as Thou hast

done for mine." With that she reached out her hands with firm courage, and taking the crown of thorns out of our Lord's hands, she put the same upon her own head with such a strength and violence that the thorns pierced her head 'round about, insomuch that for a long space after she felt a sensible pain in her head by the pricking of those thorns, as she declared afterwards to her ghostly Father. Then our Lord said to her: "Daughter, all things are in My power; and as I have suffered this slander to be raised against thee by the devil and his members, so is it in My power to cease the same when I will. Continue thou, therefore, in that holy service that thou hast begun, and give no place to the enemy that would hinder thee from all good works. I will give thee a perfect victory over thine enemy, and will bring to pass that whatsoever he hath imagined against thee, it shall all be turned to his own greater confusion." Catherine, much comforted, returned to her charitable labours, giving no heed either to the malice of her enemy or the injurious gossip of the neighbours. But when the rumours that were spread abroad reached the ears of Lapa, her anger was past control. She needed no proof of her daughter's innocence, knowing more than the world did what manner of life she led; and bursting into her presence, she began with her accustomed vehemence: "How often have I told thee that thou shouldest no more serve yonder wretched old crone? See now what reward she gives thee for all thy good service. She has brought a foul slander upon thee among all thy Sisters, which God knows whether thou wilt ever be able to rid thyself of so long as thou livest. If ever thou serve her again after this day, or if ever thou come where she is, never take me for thy mother; for I tell thee plainly I will never know thee for my daughter." Catherine listened as she spoke, and at first was somewhat troubled. But after a little time, when she had recovered her usual calm, she went to her mother, and kneeling down before her with great reverence, she spoke as follows: "Sweet mother, think you that our Lord would be pleased with us if we should leave the works of mercy undone because our neighbour shows himself unthankful towards us? When our

Saviour Christ hung on the Cross, and heard there the reproachful talk of that ungrateful people round about, did He because of their cruel words give up the charitable work of their redemption? Good mother, you know very well that if I should leave this old sick woman, she were in great danger to perish of neglect; because she would not find any one to come near her and do such service as is requisite to be done about a woman in this case; and so should I be the occasion of her death. She is now a little deceived by the ghostly enemy, but she will hereafter, by the grace of God, come to acknowledge her fault and be sorry for the same." With such words she pacified her mother's mind and got her blessing; and so returned again to the service of the sick woman, about whom she did all things with great diligence and love, never showing either in words or countenance the least token of discontent or displeasure. So that the sick Sister was much astonished and withal ashamed for what she had done, and began to have great sorrow and repentance for the slander that she had raised against her. Then it pleased our Lord to show His mercy towards His faithful spouse, and to restore her again to her good fame after this manner:—One day the holy maid went to the sick Sister's chamber to serve her, as she was wont to do; and as she was coming towards her bed where she lay, Andrea saw a marvellous goodly light coming down from heaven, which filled all her chamber, and was so beautiful that it made her utterly to forget all the pains of her disease. What that light might mean she could not conceive, but looking about her here and there she beheld the maiden's face gloriously transformed, the majesty whereof was so strong that she seemed to her rather an angel from heaven than any earthly creature. Which brightness the more the old woman beheld, the more did she condemn the malice of her own heart and tongue in slandering such an excellent and holy creature. At last her heart being quite softened, with much sobbing and weeping she confessed her fault to the holy maid, and besought her pardon. When Catherine saw her repentance and submission, she took the old woman in her arms and kissed her, and spoke very sweet words unto her, saying, "Good mother,

I have no displeasure in the world against you, but only against our enemy the devil, by whose malice and subtilty I know all this is wrought; but rather I have to thank you with all my heart, for you have reminded me to have a more careful guard to myself, and so doing, you have turned the malice of the fiend to my greater good and benefit." With such kind speeches she comforted the sick Sister, and then she set herself to do all such services as were wont to be done about her. And when she had done all, she took her leave very gently (as her manner was), and so retired to her chamber, to give God thanks. In the meantime the old woman, who had a great care to restore the innocent virgin to her good name again, when any of those came to her before whom she had made that slanderous report, took occasion openly to confess, with many tears, that whatever she had at any time reported against that holy maid she had been induced to report it by the craft of the devil, and not by anything she ever saw or knew in her. She affirmed, moreover, that she was able to prove that the holy maid was not only free from all such suspicion, but also endued with singular graces of God, and that she, was indeed, a most pure and holy virgin. "Thus much," said she, "I speak not upon hearsay or opinion, but upon my certain knowledge."[1]

But the enemy of souls was not thus to be vanquished, and returning to the attack, he endeavoured once more to overcome the Saint's heroic courage by exciting within her a revolt of the senses. One day as she uncovered the dreadful wound to wash and dress it, the infected odour which arose from it was so insupportable that it seemed impossible for her to repress the disgust which it occasioned. But full of holy indignation at her own delicacy, she turned against herself, saying, "O wretched flesh, dost thou then abhor thy fellow-Christian! I will make thee even to swallow that of which thou wilt not abide the savour," and collecting in a cup the water in which she washed the wound she went aside and drank it. This action became known, and her confessor questioned her about it. Catherine answered him

[1] Fen., Part 2, ch. xi.

with some embarrassment; at last she owned the truth, and added, "I assure you, father, never in my lifetime did I taste anything one half so sweet and delightful." The remainder of the story must be given in the words of the Legend. "The next night following, our Saviour Christ appeared to her, and showed her His Hands, Feet, and Side, and in them imprinted the five Wounds of His most bitter Passion, and said unto her: 'Dear daughter, many are the battles that thou hast sustained for My love; and great are the victories that thou hast achieved through My grace and assistance. For which I bear thee great good-will and favour. But especially that drink that thou tookest yesterday for My sake pleased Me passing well, in which, because thou hast not only despised the delight of the flesh, but cast behind thy back the opinion of the world, and utterly subdued thine own nature, I will give thee a drink that shall surpass in sweetness all the liquors that the world is able to bestow.' With that He reached out His arm, and bringing her lips to the Wound of His sacred Side, 'Drink, daughter,' He said, 'drink thy fill at the Fountain of Life!' Catherine obeyed; she pressed her lips to that Sacred Side, and drew from the wounded Heart of her Lord the liquor of life, as from the fountain of everlasting salvation!"

Meanwhile the story of her heroic charity could not be concealed. Andrea herself proclaimed to all comers the spotless innocence of her whom she had formerly calumniated, and the marvellous act of self-devotion which she had witnessed with her own eyes.[1] From that day, says Caffarini, she was called by all

[1] The story of Andrea is given in the earlier chapters of the Legend. Nothing, however, is to be concluded on that account as to the actual date of the occurrence, for Raymund grouped together events without the slightest regard to the order of time. F. Angiolo Carapelli, who has made a serious study of the chronology of St. Catherine's life, assigns it to the year 1373. And on examination, many things will be found to support the accuracy of this statement. The calumny, so incredible at a time when Catherine's reputation for sanctity stood universally respected, would not unnaturally win belief at such a crisis as has been described in the above chapter, and by the very class of persons whom we have seen so maliciously disposed against her. Then her words to her Lord, "Thou knowest that *I have resigned my*

men "the Saint;" and the fame of her virtue, spreading abroad like a sweet perfume, was carried beyond the bounds of her native place into the remotest cities of Tuscany.

will wholly to Thee," seem to bear evident reference to that exchange of wills, which it is impossible to date earlier than 1371. And lastly, from the expression used both by Caffarini and Bartholomew, we infer that it was at that time "her fame spread *through Tuscany;*" whilst naturally enough, the very next event following is her summons by the General to Florence, which we know took place in 1374.

CHAPTER XV

The Plague, 1374

"IN the May of 1374, at which time the Chapter of the Friar Preachers was being held at Florence, there came thither, by command of the Master General of the Order, a certain Sister of Penance of St. Dominic, named Catherine, daughter of Giacomo of Siena. She was of the age of twenty-seven, and was reputed to be a great servant of God; and with her came three other Sisters wearing the same habit, who held her company and took care of her, and from whom I, hearing of her fame, went to see her, and make her acquaintance." Thus writes the anonymous author of the *Miracoli;* and his words just quoted afford us the only existing notice of this first visit of Catherine to the city of Florence. No allusion to the fact is to be found in the pages either of the Legend or of any other original biography; we are left entirely in the dark as to the cause and duration of this visit, so that in the absence of all certain information on the subject, it may be permitted for us to venture on our own surmises.

She was summoned thither, as it appears, "by command of the Master General of the Order." That office was then held by F. Elias of Toulouse. Considering what had gone before, and the contradictory opinions which must have reached the General's ears regarding this celebrated woman, we can imagine it a very likely explanation that he summoned her to Florence in order that he might by his own personal examination satisfy himself as to her real spirit; and this appears the more probable, when we learn from the same writer that the injurious gossip

spoken of in the last chapter had preceded her to Florence, and was there busily caught up and propagated. For he tells us that a dear friend of hers in that city expressing his sorrow at hearing that there was much murmuring against her singular way of life, not only on the part of the laity, but also of religious, she replied, "That is my glory; that is what I desire, to be well spoken against all my life; never you care about it! I am sorry for them, but not for myself." It seems then most probable that the hubbub which had been going on at Siena, involving as it did not Catherine alone, but also her confessor and the other fathers who had stood her friends, must have come to the knowledge of Father Elias, and necessitated his interference. The great theological Order of the Church, which glories in the title of the "Order of Truth," could scarcely be indifferent as to the real character of one wearing their habit, who was proclaimed on one side to be an Ecstatica and a Saint, living without corporal food, nourished by the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, to whose supernatural glance the secrets of hearts were manifested, and whose prayers had never been known to be offered without avail; and who, on the other, was stigmatised as an impostor and a hypocrite, who not only went astray seduced by the enemy, but was leading all the weak heads of Siena after her.

Whatever may have been the cause, the fact of her visit appears certain, and if there is any truth in the above surmise, we must suppose that the result of the investigation of the General and the Fathers of the Chapter proved perfectly satisfactory. It was the first journey that Catherine had ever taken so far from her native place. No doubt she must have contrasted the splendour of the great republican capital with the more homely beauties of her own little city. All things in Florence were then peaceful and prosperous, and there was nothing to indicate the outbreak of that terrific storm which two years later was to bring her back in a far different capacity. There can be no doubt, however, that the ties she formed during this, her first visit to Florence, and the impression she left on the minds of the people, had much to do with their future appeal to her mediation; and we

may almost certainly conclude that the "dear friend" spoken of above can have been no other than Nicolas Soderini, the brave and virtuous citizen whose friendship for her began at this time, and lasted until death. In fact, his house was always her home in Florence, and in it is still to be seen a little chamber said to have been that occupied by Catherine, on the wall of which is painted a crucifix, before which she is supposed to have prayed. Soderini had been introduced to Catherine by her brothers, who, it will be remembered, were then living in Florence, and whom, being unfortunate in business, he had assisted with money.[1] According to the "*Archivio di Magistrato*," they occupied a house near the *Canto a Soldani*, in a street running into the *Piazza d'Arno*. Bartolo's children were at Siena with their grandmother, but Catherine would have found here her niece Nanna, the daughter of the elder brother, who soon became dear to her. After she left Florence she often wrote to this young girl, and one letter is preserved which shall be quoted here for the sake of its sweet motherly tone, betraying that it was written by one remarkable for her tender love of children, and who knew how to adapt her style to the capacity of a child.

"Dearest daughter in Christ, I desire to see you avoiding everything which can hinder you from having Jesus for your Spouse. But you will not be able to do this if you are not one of His wise virgins, who have their lamps full of oil and light. Do you know what that means? The lamp is our heart, for our heart should be made like a lamp. You know a lamp is broad at the top and narrow at the bottom; that is the shape of our heart, which we must always keep open to heavenly things and good thoughts . . . but the lamp is narrow at the foot, and so we must shut our hearts up and keep them closed to things of earth. In this way our hearts will be like a lamp: but then we must have oil, for you know, my child, that without oil a lamp is of no use. Now the oil represents that sweet little virtue humility, for the spouse of Christ must be very humble, and mild,

[1] "As to Benincasa's affair, I can say nothing about it, not being in Siena. I thank Master Nicolas for his charity to them."—Letter 115.

and patient. . . . If we are patient and humble we shall have oil in our lamp; but that is not enough, the lamp must be lighted. Now the light is holy faith, but it must not be a dead faith, but a holy living faith; you know the Saints tell us faith without works is dead. We must try then to apply ourselves to virtue, and abandon our childish ways and vanities, and live, not like silly girls in the world, but like faithful spouses of Jesus, and so we shall have the lamp, the oil, and the light. But remember our sweet Spouse is so jealous of His spouses,—I could never tell you how jealous He is!—If He sees you loving anything beside Himself, He will be angry, and if you do not correct your faults, He will shut the door, and you will not be able to enter when the nuptials are celebrated. It was so with the five foolish virgins . . . they had not brought the oil of humility, and it was said to them, 'Go and buy oil.' There is an oil which the world sells, it is the oil of flattery and praise, and so it was said to the foolish virgins, 'You have not chosen to buy eternal life with your good works, but you chose to buy the praise of men, and all you have done was done for that; go now, then, and buy that praise, but you cannot enter here.' Beware then, my child, of the flattery of men; do not seek for your actions to be praised, for if you do the door of eternal life will be closed."

Catherine left Florence some time in June, and returned to Siena to find the city suffering from the twofold calamity of famine and pestilence. Neither of these scourges were new things in Siena, which had been wellnigh depopulated by the plague in the very year of Catherine's birth. But never before had it been known to rage with equal violence. It attacked persons of all ages, and a single day often sufficed to begin and end its fatal course. A panic seized the population; and whilst the more wealthy sought safety by flight, the poorer sort were thus abandoned in their misery, with none to help them. It will be remembered that when Catherine had left the city in the month previous it was under sorrowful circumstances. Many of her own sisters, and of those friars whose very footsteps in old time she had kissed with loving reverence, had turned their backs

on her, regarding her as something half-way between a mad-woman and an impostor. She had received scorn and insult precisely from those who were most bound to protect her; and, true woman as she was, it is not to be believed that she could have been wholly insensible to such cruel injuries, or that the memory of them could have been quite effaced by subsequent applause. But now when she saw the gaunt faces of her fellow-citizens, and heard the doleful sound of the dead-cart as it went from house to house gathering the bodies of that day's victims for burial, there was but one thought in her heart, "This time is for me."

Her first ministrations were needed in her own family. Her sister Lisa (of the hospital) was one of the first victims. Then Bartolo, who had accompanied Catherine back to Siena to see his mother, was carried off by the pestilence. Francis Malevolti tells us that Catherine at this time lost *two* of her brothers, "both honourable merchants," and his statement is explained by a passage in the deposition of Peter Ventura. He tells us that Stephen had gone to Rome on occasion of the approaching Jubilee, and that one night, Catherine, who had received a revelation of his death, called her mother and said, "Know, dear mother, that your son and my brother has just passed out of this life," and some days later the fact was confirmed by persons who came from Rome bringing the sad tidings.[1] But this was not all: out of eleven of her grandchildren whom Lapa was bringing up in her own house, most of them the children of Bartolo, eight died. Truly in that hour of cruel bereavement she must have sighed for the death from which she had formerly shrunk, and bitterly bemoaned herself in the desolate house once filled with the gay voices of so many innocent children. But Catherine, to whom they were all so dear, buried them with her own hands, saying as she laid them one by one in their last resting-place, "This one, at least, I shall not lose." Then she turned her thoughts to those outside her home, and resumed her old habits of heroic charity. Terrible indeed are the accounts left by

[1] Process., fol. 199.

historians of this awful time. In some streets not a creature was left alive to answer the call when the dead-cart stopped at their door. Sometimes the priests and those who carried a bier to the grave fell lifeless while performing this last act of charity, and were buried in the yet open sepulchre. The public tribunals were closed, and the laws no longer remained in force. The victims were of all ranks. Two of the "Defenders" died within a day or two of each other. At the great Hospital of La Scala, the Rector, Galgano di Lolo, gave his life in discharge of the duties of his office.[1] The charity and the resources of the Confraternity of the *Disciplinati* were taxed to the uttermost, and not a few of them in like manner died martyrs of charity.

Once more, therefore, was Catherine to be seen in the hospitals, and the most infected parts of the city, assisting all no less with her charitable services than with her prayers. "Never did she appear more admirable than at this time," says Caffarini; "she was always with the plague-stricken; she prepared them for death, she buried them with her own hands. I myself witnessed the joy with which she tended them, and the wonderful efficacy of her words, which effected many conversions. Not a few owed their lives to her self-devoted care, and she encouraged her companions to perform the like services." For herself she was insensible either to fear or the repugnances of nature. *She had died and*

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[1] The office of Rector of La Scala was one of great dignity and importance. The person who filled it was by right a member of the high Consistory, and, moreover, appointed the governors of a great many other hospitals which depended on this one, not only in Siena, but even in other towns of Tuscany. He was also protector of several other charitable institutions in the city. Some of the governors were bound to be Sienese gentlemen. Besides the ordinary work of a hospital, La Scala received and educated foundlings, lodged pilgrims, and distributed alms to the sick and needy outside its walls; and in time of famine it distributed a great quantity of grain. Its revenues were very large. Among its sacred treasures is the Holy Nail that transfixed the left hand of our Lord on the Cross. Here is also preserved the Sienese standard which was carried at the great victory of Montaperto to which was given the title of the "*Manto di Maria;*" and a picture representing our Lady covering the city and its inhabitants with her mantle in token of her protection.—*Diario Sanese*, ii. 95, 96.

come to life again, and in whatever sense we understand that incident, she had come to regard this world as we also should regard it were we true to our profession of faith; as those could not fail to regard it to whom the last things and the eternal truths had by earnest meditation become realities. What were the chances of life or death, sickness or danger, to one who (as we may say) had *seen eternity?* What should they be to those who verily believe in it? "How can you endure such cold?" asked her confessor one day, as he saw her setting forth to her daily fatigues, scantily protected from the bitter winds to which Siena is so much exposed. "A dead body feels nothing,"[1] was her reply; and truly in her total insensibility to the claims of nature she might fitly have been said to have been dead. That heroic act of her early life by which she had chosen suffering as her portion in this world, was no empty profession; in virtue of it she accepted pain, fatigue, humiliation, and the frustration of many hopes with an equal mind and with an utter indifference to everything save the discharge of duty. Caffarini tells us that her disciples would sometimes express their wonder at her patience and courage; but in reply she would only laugh, and say, "If people knew how sweet it is to suffer for God, they would covet the opportunities of having something to bear as a piece of singular good fortune." In the same place he relates how a certain priest, having come from Florence for the purpose of testing her sanctity, in his presence uttered the most injurious reproaches against the holy virgin, who, lying on her bed of boards (for she was at the time very weak), listened to it all with a countenance so sweet and unmoved, and with such a heavenly joy and serenity, that when the speaker left her presence, he could only say that "she was pure unalloyed gold."[2] It was in this spirit, therefore, that she took on herself during this frightful time labours and duties, at the thought of which flesh and blood might well have shuddered; and whilst we are told that the unhappy citizens shrank from encountering one another in the streets, where men, to use the expression of Tommasi, "were

[1] Burlamacchi's notes to the Legend. [2] Process., 1270, 1271.

daily falling dead like ripe apples from the tree," there was one form from which they did not shrink, but welcomed it as the harbinger of comfort; for they recognised in that attenuated, white-robed figure, "Catherine, the spouse of Christ," she whom they were wont to call "the Mother of Souls."[1]

For by this time her fellow-citizens had come to understand who and what she was. In their intolerable sufferings she possessed the power of consolation. She could give them sympathy, for they had not lost more than she. They had seen her burying the little ones whom she loved so tenderly; and mothers, therefore, who had lost their treasures, could bear to listen to her when she told them not to grieve.

It was precisely at this time that she made her first acquaintance with him who during the remainder of her life was to enjoy her entire confidence. This was Father Raymund of Capua, a Friar Preacher eminent alike for his learning and virtue, who for four years had filled the office of confessor to the nuns of St. Agnes of Montepulciano, where he wrote the life of that saint. He was a member of the Neapolitan family Delle Vigne, to which had belonged the celebrated chancellor of Frederick II. Early called into the Order of St. Dominic in some remarkable manner which he alludes to, but does not narrate, he suffered much from weak health, on which account the physicians forbade his keeping the fasts of the Order. This greatly afflicted him; and making it a matter of special prayer, he obtained strength enough not only to keep the obligations of his rule, but even to fast on bread and water on the vigils of all our Lady's feasts.[2] After preaching and lecturing on Sacred Theology in various cities of Italy, he was made Prior of the Minerva at Rome in 1367, and in that capacity presented his community to Urban V. when that Pontiff visited the eternal city. He was remarkable for his great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and composed a treatise on the Magnificat in

[1] Process. Dep. of Bart. de Ferrara.

[2] He relates this story himself in a letter to Philip, Cardinal of Ostia, written in defence of regular observance, and by way of proving that on this head physicians are not the only authorities to be consulted.

her honour, as well as the Office used on the feast of the Visitation. Several years before he became acquainted with Catherine, the same most Blessed Virgin had made known to the Saint that she would one day obtain for her a confessor who would give her more help than any she had yet consulted. The first occasion on which she saw him was the feast of St. John Baptist, when the high mass for the day was sung by F. Bartholomew Dominic, assisted by F. Raymund of Capua, and F. Thomas della Fonte. After the conclusion of the high mass, Raymund said his own low mass, at which Catherine likewise assisted; and it was then that she heard a Voice saying, "This is My beloved servant; this is he to whom I will give thee."[1] From that day she placed the direction of her conscience in his hands. No doubt Raymund was well aware of the difference of opinion which existed among some of the Friars regarding her. He had probably been consulted on the subject by them, and the visit of F. Thomas della Fonte and F. George Naddi to Montepulciano, mentioned in a former chapter, may have had some connection with the same affair. It is even possible that his superiors had despatched him to Siena with a view of settling the disputes which were dividing the community of San Domenico, as one to whose character and experience all would yield. These, however, are only conjectures; what is certain is, that a complete confidence was established between him and F. Thomas, equally honourable to both parties. F. Thomas put him in possession of his long experience in the guidance of this soul; of the notes he had taken day by day of her supernatural graces; and in particular of all the wonderful favours granted to her in Holy Communion.

Raymund, who was a man of much greater learning than F. Thomas, hesitated not in the favourable judgment which he at

[1] (Latin) Supplement, Part 2, Trat. 6, § 17. I quote the original as referred to and explained by Carapelli, in preference to Tantucci's translation, which is in this place obscure. See also letter of Stephen Maconi, and Catherine's letter to Raymund of Capua, No. 134. If the whole circumstances of the foregoing narrative are borne in mind, the change of confessors and final appointment of Raymund to that office become clear and intelligible.

once formed on the question. "I first became acquainted with Catherine," he says, "when I went to Siena as Lector; and I used my best efforts to procure her the privilege of receiving Holy Communion, so that when she desired to approach, she more confidently addressed herself to me than to any other Father in the convent." This simple and unpretentious statement reveals to us that up to that time the difficulties which had been raised on the subject of Catherine's communions had by no means been dissipated. But Raymund's reputation and influence were of sufficient weight to prevent any interference between him and his new penitent; and from that time Catherine had no more disturbance on the subject.

Still the plague raged with ever-increasing violence. Raymund perceived the terror that it everywhere inspired, and knowing, as he says, "that zeal for souls is the spirit of our Holy Order," he devoted himself to the aid of the sufferers. He, too, visited the sick and the hospitals, and in particular he went very often to the *Casa della Misericordia*, the Rector of which establishment, Master Matthew,[1] he loved entirely for his virtue's sake. Both he and Catherine were, in fact, in the habit of calling at the *Misericordia* every day to confer with Matthew upon matters connected with the relief of the poor.

One day, then, as Raymund was going his rounds visiting the sick, having to pass the gates of the hospital he went in to see how Master Matthew was. The rest of the story must be given as it stands in the pages of the English Legend.

"When he entered, he saw the brethren busily occupied carrying Master Matthew from the church towards his chamber. With

[1] Master Matthew was appointed Rector of the *Misericordia*, August 1, 1373. In the *Leggenda Minore* the date 1373 is given for his attack of the plague and its appearance in the city. The author of the *Miracoli* gives 1374, and the correctness of the latter date is confirmed by the Sienese Chronicle of Neri di Donato and the Necrology of San Domenico. We must remember that, according to the Sienese method of computation, the first three months of 1374 would be reckoned as 1373. The plague may also have first appeared in that year, but historians are unanimous in giving the later date as that of its greatest ravages.

that he asked him cheerfully how he did. But Master Matthew was so feeble and so far spent that he could not give him one word to answer. Then he asked them that were about him how that sickness came to him. And they made answer that he had watched that night with one that was sick of the plague, and about midnight took the sickness of him; since which time, said they, he has remained, as you see, without colour, strength, or spirit. When they had brought him to his chamber, they laid him down upon his bed, where, when he had rested a little while, he came to himself again, and called for Raymund, and made his confession to him, as he was wont oftentimes to do. That done, Raymund tried to cheer him. 'Master Matthew,' said he, 'how do you feel? Where is your pain?' 'My pain,' he said, 'is in the groin, so that it seems as if my thigh were ready to break in sunder; and I have so vehement a headache, as though my head would cleave in four parts.' With that he felt his pulse, and found, indeed, that he had a very sharp fever. Whereupon he caused them to send for a physician, who, when he came, declared that he saw evident tokens of a pestilential ague, and also of approaching death. 'Wherefore,' he said, 'I am very sorry, for I see we are like to lose a very dear friend, and they of this house a very good Rector.' 'What,' said Raymund, 'is it not possible by your art to devise some kind of medicine that may do him good?' 'We will see to-morrow,' said he; 'but to tell you truly, I have small hope of doing him any good, the disease is too far gone.' When Raymund heard these words, he returned towards the sick man again with a heavy heart. In the meantime it came to the ears of Catherine that Master Matthew was dangerously sick of the plague. When she heard that she was much troubled; for she knew him to be a very virtuous man, and therefore loved him greatly; and forthwith went in great haste towards his house. And before she came into his presence she cried out with a loud voice, saying: 'Master Matthew, rise! Rise up, Master Matthew: It is no time to lie now sluggishly in your bed.' At that word and at that very instant the pain and headache and the whole disease quite forsook him, and he rose up as merry and as sound

in his body as if there had never been any such disease upon him. And when he was ready he honoured the holy maid, and gave her most humble thanks, saying that he knew now by experience in his own body that the power of God dwelt in her and wrought strange things by her. But she could not abide to hear any words that tended to her own commendation, and therefore she went away. As she was going out, F. Raymund came towards the house, and meeting her in the gate, looked very heavily, for he knew nothing of all this that was done in the house, but came directly from the physician. When he saw her there, being as it were overcome with sorrow, he said to her: 'O mother, will you suffer this good man that is so dear to us, and so profitable and necessary to many others, to die after this sort?' To that she made answer very humbly, showing, indeed, that she had no liking of such words. 'O father,' said she, 'what manner of talk is this that you use to me? Do you take me to be a God that you would have me deliver a mortal man from death?' 'I pray you,' said he, 'speak these words to those who are strangers to you, and not to me who knows your secrets. I know well enough that whatever you ask of God heartily He will grant you.' With that she bowed down her head a little and smiled; and after a time, looking up to him again cheerfully, she said these words: 'Father, be of good cheer, for he shall not die this time.' When Raymund heard these words, he was much comforted, for he knew well what grace was given to her from above. And so he went into the house to comfort his friend, supposing that the thing had been yet to do that was already done. When he came in he found him sitting up in good health, declaring to them that were about him the manner of the miracle that had been wrought upon himself. For the further confirmation whereof the table was laid, and they ate together that morning, not such meats as sick men use to eat, but raw onions and such other coarse meats as cannot be digested save only by those in perfect health. And as they were eating they took great pleasure to recite the wonderful things that it pleased God to work by the holy maid.

"In the course of this same plague the hermit Fra Santi caught

the contagion, which, when Catherine understood, she caused him to be taken out of his cell, and to be brought to the *Misericordia*, where she came to him with some other of her Sisters and nursed him, providing for him all such things as she thought necessary. And to comfort him with words also, she put her head close to his, and whispered him softly in the ear, saying: 'Be not afraid, however you feel, for you shall not die this time.' But to the rest that were there she said no such thing, but rather, when they entreated her that she would pray to God for his recovery, she gave them but a doubtful answer, which made them very sad, for they all knew him to be a holy man, and therefore both honoured and loved him tenderly. The disease increased hourly more and more, and they despairing of his life gave over the charge of his body, and looked only to the health of his soul. At last, when he was in extremes, and they all stood about him with great heaviness, looking only when he would give up the ghost, the holy maid came to him again, and said in his ear: 'Be not afraid, for you shall not die at this time.' The sick man both heard and understood that word, though before it seemed that he was past all sense. And he took comfort in it, crediting the word of the holy maid that sounded in his ear rather than the throes of death that gripped him by the heart. However, he showed no token of amendment, and therefore they, not understanding what she had said, provided lights and other things for his burial, looking still when he would depart out of this life. At last, when it seemed that he was even passing out of the world, Catherine came to him again, and spake these words in his ear: 'I command thee, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou pass not at this time.' At that word he took comfort of spirit and strength of body, and rose up in his bed and called for meat, and ate in the presence of them all; and after that time lived many years, and was one of them that were present with the holy maid in Rome when she departed out of this life."[1]

Besides these cases of her power with the sick, Raymund had experience of the same in his own person. "When the plague

[1] Fen., Part 4, chap. iii.

was raging in Siena," he says, "I resolved to sacrifice my life for the salvation of souls and not to avoid any plague-stricken patient whatever. It is certain that the malady is contagious; but I knew that our Lord Jesus Christ is more powerful than Galen, and that grace is superior to nature. I also saw that many had taken flight, and that the dying remained without assistance; and as the blessed Catherine had taught me that charity obliges us to love the soul of our neighbour more than our own body, I was desirous of assisting as many sick as I could, and I did so by God's grace. I was almost alone in that vast city, and had scarcely time to take a little food and sleep. One night as I rested, and the time approached to rise and recite my office, I felt a violent pain in the part which is first attacked by that malady, and soon discovered the fatal swelling which declares its presence. Greatly alarmed, I dared not rise, and began to think of my approaching death. I longed to see Catherine before the disease made further progress, and when morning came, I dragged myself with my companion to Catherine's residence; but she was absent, having gone out to visit a sick person. I decided to wait, and as I could no longer support myself, I was obliged to lie down on a bed which was there, and besought the persons of the house not to delay sending for her. When she came, and saw my excessive suffering, she knelt down by my bed, placed her hand on my forehead, and began to pray interiorly as usual; I saw she was in an ecstasy, and I thought that there would soon result some good both for my soul and body. She remained thus during nearly an hour and a half, when I felt a universal movement in every limb, which I thought was the prelude to some dangerous crisis; but I was in error, for I began at that moment to improve; and before Catherine had recovered the use of her senses, I was completely cured, there only remaining in me a certain weakness, a proof of my illness, or an effect of my want of faith. Catherine, aware of the grace that she had obtained from her Spouse, came to herself and caused them to prepare for me the ordinary nourishment common to the sick. When I had taken it from her virginal hands, she ordered me to sleep

a little. I obeyed, and on awakening I found myself as well as if nothing had happened to me. Then she said to me, 'Now, go and labour for the salvation of souls, and render thanks to the Almighty God who has delivered you from this danger.' I returned to my ordinary work, glorifying the Lord who had bestowed such power on His faithful spouse." At the same time and in the same manner she effected the cure of F. Bartholomew, though he had been lying sick of the plague for a considerable time. Simon of Cortona was also cured by her, as he himself relates in his deposition.

Raymund relates other miracles, such as the cure of one of the Sisters of Penance, who lived near the *Misericordia*, and devoted herself to Catherine's service, and who was crushed under a falling building. The neighbours drew her out of the ruins, and found her not dead, but in horrible anguish and past medical aid. "As soon as Catherine heard it," he continues, "she was filled with compassion for one who was her Sister, and who had made herself her servant. She went immediately to visit her, and exhorted her to patience. When she saw her suffering so excessively, she began to touch the places of which she complained; the patient willingly consenting, because she knew that those blessed hands could not fail to do her good. As soon as Catherine touched any place, its pains vanished: then the sick woman showed her the other parts that were tormented, so that she might apply the same remedy, and Catherine lent herself to this charity with so much care that she finished by completely healing her. In proportion as her virginal hand glided over the bruised body, the pain disappeared, and the sick woman, who before could not move a single member, little by little recovered the power of motion. She kept silence whilst Catherine was present lest she might alarm her humility, but afterwards she said to the physicians and neighbours who surrounded her: 'Catherine, Lapa's daughter, has cured me by touching me.'"

Another cure, attested by all Catherine's biographers, was that of Sister Gemmina, one of the Mantellate, who, being attacked by a quinsy and in danger of suffocation, by an extraordinary

effort contrived to get to Catherine's house, and said to her, "Mother, I shall die, if you do not help me!" Full of pity, Catherine applied her hand to the sufferer's throat, and at once the malady left her.

But pestilence was not the only scourge which at this time afflicted Siena; terrible civil disorders were likewise preying on the lifeblood of the republic. She was reaping the inevitable fruits of revolution. No government found itself strong enough to repress the licence which universally reigned; and while the Riformatori were capable of any oppressive act towards the weak, a powerful miscreant had every chance of escaping just punishment.

Geri, Lord of Perolla, had an only daughter, to whom when dying he left his castle and estates in the Tuscan Maremma. Her kinsman, Andrea Salimbeni, under pretext of a friendly visit, seized the castle, and dyed his murderous hand in the blood of the innocent girl. He then applied himself to sack and ravage the adjacent territories; but such an excess of brutality did at last rouse the indignation of the senator, who prepared to avenge the crime. An armed force was despatched against Andrea: he was taken with twenty-eight associates, and committed to prison on the 23d of April 1374. A few days later, sixteen of the more insignificant criminals were executed, but the senator feared to proceed to extremities against Andrea and his more powerful comrades; and so the real authors of the bloody outrage were spared. When the *popolani* learnt this, they assembled in vast numbers, and marching to the doors of the *Palazzo Pubblico*, demanded vengeance. Galgano, the captain of the people, deserted by his colleagues and powerless to resist the armed multitude, came forth and declared that he made over to their leader, Nocci di Vanni, a saddler by trade, the right and authority to do whatever he might deem best for the public good. The stern tribune seated himself on the bench of justice and commanded Andrea to be brought before him. Then in few words sentence was given, and the miserable man was borne forth into the Piazza, and there summarily beheaded.

The Salimbeni and all their adherents, furious at this act of popular justice, flew to arms; Cione Salimbeni, thinking it a good opportunity for gratifying his ambition, seized several fortresses belonging to the republic; and soon the whole mountain region was plunged in war, if such be not too dignified a word to be applied to the ruffianly hostilities of these bandit chieftains. Agnolo Salimbeni, the head of the family, and a man of chivalrous honour, seems on this occasion to have acted in a way which earned him the confidence of the citizens; for they made over to him the command of some of the strongest castles, a circumstance which excited against him the jealousy of Cione, and became the origin of a feud which was only extinguished three years later through the efforts of St. Catherine. But while such anarchy raged throughout the country, the fields were left uncultivated, and the miserable peasantry took refuge within the city walls from the violence of the roving brigand bands. Famine soon came to increase the horrors of pestilence, and Catherine and her companions had to feed as well as to nurse the destitute citizens. To this year must probably be assigned an incident which is related in the Legend, and which we shall quote from its English version. Catherine, as it seems, was at that time staying, according to her wont, in the house of Alexia. "It chanced that year that there was such a scarcity of corn in the city and country, that the people were constrained to eat bread made of musty corn that had been kept long time in underground caves, because there was none other to be got for money. Of such corn Alexia had made provision for herself and her family for that year. But before her store was spent, the harvest-time was come, and she heard that there was new corn to be sold in the market, whereupon she thought to cast away the little portion that was left of the musty corn, and buy new. But before she did it, Catherine being in the house with her, she chanced to break her mind to her, and to tell her what she was about to do. 'What will you do?' said she; 'will you cast that away that God hath sent for the sustenance of man? If you will not eat of that bread yourself, yet bestow it upon the poor that

have no bread to eat.' To that Alexia replied, saying, that she had a conscience to give such mouldy and unwholesome bread to the poor, she would rather buy new corn, and make them bread of that. 'Well,' said the holy maid, 'bring me here a little water and that meal which you intend to cast away, and I will make bread of it for the poor.' So Alexia did as she was bid. Then the holy maid took it, and made paste of it; and of the paste made such a quantity of bread, and that so quickly, that Alexia and her servant, who beheld her all the time, were astonished to see it, for they made as many loaves as would have required four or five times as much meal; and delivered them to Alexia to lay upon boards and carry to the oven. And (which was most marvellous) there was no bad savour in those loaves as there was in all other made of the same corn. But when they were baked and set on the table to eat, they that ate of them could find no manner of evil taste in them, but rather said that they had not in their life eaten better or more savoury bread. This miracle being spread in the city, her confessor came with certain other of his brethren to examine the matter, and found, in very deed, that there were two great miracles wrought, one in augmenting the quantity of the paste, and another in amending the evil quality and stench of the corn. And a third miracle was added soon after, which was, that whereas the bread was very liberally dealt out to the poor and none other eaten in the house but that, yet there remained ever more great store of it in the larder. And so it continued many days and weeks, which moved certain devout persons that understood the truth of the matter to take some of the said bread, and to lay it up reverently where it might be kept for a relic and perpetual remembrance of the great work that Almighty God had wrought by His dear spouse. Afterwards F. Raymund being desirous to be more particularly informed of the matter by the holy maid, prayed her that she would declare to him how the thing had passed. And she made him answer simply after this manner: 'Father, I had a great zeal that the thing that God had sent us for the relief of man should not be lost; and I had moreover a great compassion

for the poor. Whereupon I went to the hutch of meal with great fervour of spirit. As soon as I was there, behold, our blessed Lady likewise was there with me, accompanied with a number of saints and angels, and bade me to go forward with my work as I had determined. And she was so benign and charitable that she vouchsafed to labour with me, and to work the paste with her own hands; and so by the virtue of her holy hands were those loaves multiplied in such sort as you have heard, for she made the loaves and gave them to me, and I delivered them to Alexia and her servant.' 'Truly, mother,' said F. Raymund, 'I marvel not now if that bread seemed to me and others that tasted it passing sweet, considering that it was made with the hands of that most heavenly and glorious Queen, in whose sacred body was wrought and made by the Holy Trinity that living Bread that came down from heaven to give life to all true believers.'"

F. Thomas Caffarini mentions this incident in his deposition, and says he was one of those who had eaten of the bread thus made. Father Simon of Cortona also declares that during this time of famine the Saint often multiplied bread in order to feed the poor, and that he was himself present on one such occasion.

CHAPTER XVI

Catherine at Montepulciano, 1374

A RUMOUR of the heroic deeds performed by Catherine and her companion during the plague was not long in reaching Pisa, where it made a great sensation, specially among the nuns of a certain convent which Raymund does not name. They appear to have pressed her to pay them a visit, but not meeting with the success they desired, they put the affair into the hands of a personage no less important than Peter Gambacorta, the supreme head of the republic. The character of this celebrated man is variously represented by various historians, but if not free from the charge of ambition, it undoubtedly possessed many noble points. His father and uncles had distinguished themselves by their resistance to the usurpation of a certain Giovanni Agnello, who, secretly encouraged by the Emperor Charles IV. (the same whom we have seen so ignominiously defeated at Siena), had assumed the title of Doge, and aimed at becoming the tyrant of the republic. The Gambacorti had paid the penalty of their patriotism on the block; their estates were confiscated, whilst Peter and the surviving members of the family were driven into banishment. Before many years were over, however, a fresh revolution broke out. The Doge was deposed, and all the exiles recalled. Peter and his children, now reduced to the utmost poverty, returned to Pisa, and entered the city in triumph carrying olive branches in their hands. Amid the acclamations of the populace they proceeded to the Cathedral, and there, standing before the high altar, Peter gave thanks to God for his restoration to his native country, and solemnly swore in the name of all the

exiles "to live as a good citizen, forgiving and forgetting all past injuries." When we remember the ruthless spirit of the age in all that concerned the forgiveness of enemies, this act on the part of one who had suffered such bitter injustice appears truly heroic; and indeed it was far above the comprehension of his partisans. Instead of following so glorious an example, they proceeded to celebrate their triumph by setting fire to Agnello's house; and the wind being high, the flames spread, and the entire city was threatened with destruction. Then it was seen that Peter's promise was not an idle form of words; he rushed from the Cathedral into the midst of the burning flames, and interposed his own person between the savage multitude and his fallen enemies; all day long he was to be seen battling with the fire, and driving back the maddened mob; and standing there alone like a true hero he cried aloud to those who clamoured for the blood of Agnello, "*I* have pardoned him, what right have *you* to revenge?"[1]

Such a man was worthy and capable of appreciating the character of Catherine; and he was not unwilling to draw her to Pisa at a moment when the political horizon was overcast, and when there seemed no small likelihood of a breach between Florence and the court of Avignon. So he sent her a letter pressing her to come, to which Catherine's answer is preserved:—

"I received your letter," she says, "and was much touched by it; I know it is not my virtue or goodness, for I am full of miseries, but your own kindness and that of these holy ladies which moves you to write to me so humbly, begging me to come to you. I would gladly comply with your wish and theirs, but for the present must beg to be excused: my weak health will not permit of it; and, moreover, I see that just now it would be an occasion of scandal. I hope, however, please God, that when the time arrives when I can do so without offence, and without giving rise to murmurs, I may be able to come, and then I shall be at your command. Recommend me to those holy ladies and beg them to pray for me, that I may ever be humble and subject to my Creator."

[1] Sismondi, vol. vii. ch. xlviii.

The state of her health which she here gives as a reason for declining the invitation to Pisa was indeed more suffering than it had been at any former period. Possibly, she had exhausted her strength during the time of the pestilence, for we learn by a passage in the *Miracoli* that in the August of that same year she was attacked by grievous sickness. "On the feast of the Assumption, 1374," says the author of that memoir, "Catherine fell sick, and was brought to death's door, but there was no sign of pestilence in her malady. She believed herself dying, which caused her the most unbounded joy. It would be impossible to describe the rapture she felt at the thought that she was passing to eternal life, and the very joy she felt so comforted and restored her vital powers, that the danger passed. Whereat she conceived a great sorrow and began to pray to the Blessed Virgin that she would not permit her to remain longer in this life. Then our Lady appeared to her, saying, 'Catherine, my daughter, seest thou all that crowd of people who are behind me?' 'Yes,' she replied, '*Madonna mia*, I see them all.' 'Then,' continued our Lady, 'look and see which thou wilt choose. My Divine Son, desiring that thou shouldst live yet a little longer, will give thee all these souls to be brought to eternal life, besides those others whom He has already given to thee, if thy death is deferred for another time; but if thou choose to die now, He will not give them to thee. Choose, therefore, which thou wilt.' Then Catherine replied again, '*Madonna mia*, thou knowest that there is no power in me to will or not to will, for my will is not mine, because I have given it to thy Son Jesus.' Then said our Lady, '*Know then that He has given thee all these souls that I have shown thee;* and that He will call thee to Himself another time, when it shall please Him.' Our Lady disappeared, and Catherine found herself delivered from the sickness which she had been suffering. Some time after she made known this vision to a person, who asked her, saying, 'Should you know any of those persons whom our Lady showed to you?' And she replied, 'Yes, if I were to see them, I should know them all.'"

The other reason she assigns for deferring her visit lest she

should give occasion of complaint to her fellow-citizens is but an example of the difficulties which generally presented themselves in the way of her leaving Siena. In the present case, however, they were rather more serious than usual, for just then Peter Gambacorta was not in very good odour with the magistrates of Siena. He had encouraged the Prior of the Pisan knights of St. John to seize possession first of the strong place called Rocca dell' Albarese, and then of the castle of Talamon, and to hold them in the name of the Church. Talamon, as has been stated before, was the key of Siena, and its occupation by the knights was a very sore point with the citizens. Catherine therefore was wisely anxious not to irritate them further, and besides, she was habitually reluctant, and not forward, when there was any question of producing herself before a world of strangers. So she remained at Siena during the remainder of that year and the beginning of the following; and whilst waiting for a more favourable opportunity for visiting Pisa, she undertook a less distant journey to the monastery of St. Agnes at Montepulciano. It is here that Raymund of Capua had resided for three years as confessor to the nuns before coming to Siena. He tells us in his Legend that Catherine had a great love for these holy pilgrimages; and, naturally enough, has given a rather careful account of the two visits which she paid to the convent which was his old home, and which he still governed as Vicar of the Provincial. Moreover, he goes out of his way to relate to us the history of St. Agnes, which he had written during his residence there, and which he also related to Catherine. After hearing his narrative she conceived a great desire to go and venerate the body of the saint which was preserved there incorrupt; and having asked and obtained the permission of her superiors, she set out with her companions; Raymund and Father Thomas following her the day after. Having reached the convent, Catherine at once proceeded to visit the holy body, attended by all the nuns of the community, as well as by the Sisters of Penance who accompanied her; and kneeling at the feet of St. Agnes she stooped to kiss them, when in the sight of all present one of the feet suddenly

raised itself as if to meet her lips. At this spectacle Catherine was much troubled and confused, and restoring the foot to its former position, she prostrated in humble prayer. Next day when the two confessors arrived they found no small discussion on what had passed going on among the religious; some affirming it to have been the work of God, and others disposed rather to regard it as a deceit of the enemy. Raymund, as superior of the nuns, thought it prudent to investigate the matter; and calling the community together desired all to give their testimony under a precept of holy obedience. "All present," he writes, "declared that they had seen the incident occur as related; and as there was one who had offered greater opposition than the rest, I inquired of her more particularly whether the affair had passed as had been represented. 'Yes,' she replied, 'I do not deny it, I desire only to explain that the intention of St. Agnes was not what you believe.' 'My very dear Sister,' I replied, 'we do not interrogate you concerning the intentions of St. Agnes, being well aware that you are neither her secretary nor her confidante; we merely ask you whether you saw the foot rise?' To that she assented; and I then imposed a penance on her for the discourses she had indiscreetly held."

Some little time later Catherine returned to the convent bringing her two nieces, Eugenia and another whose name is not preserved, both of whom took the religious habit in the community. "As soon as she arrived," says Raymund, "she repaired, as at the first time, to the body of the saintly foundress with her companions and some nuns from the convent; she did not place herself at the feet this time, but approached the head; designing by humility, as we presume, to avoid what had happened before when she attempted to kiss the feet; or perhaps she remembered that Mary Magdalen at first poured her perfumes over the Saviour's feet and afterwards shed them over His head. She placed her face on the ornaments of gold and silk which cover the countenance of St. Agnes, and there remained a long time; then she turned sweetly to Lisa, the mother of her two nieces, and inquired smiling: 'What, do you not observe the present that Heaven

sends us: do not be ungrateful!' At these words, Lisa and the others lifted their eyes and saw a very fine white manna falling like heavenly dew, and covering not only St. Agnes and Catherine, but also all the persons present, and with such abundance that Lisa filled her hand with it."

A letter is preserved, written by the Saint to Eugenia after her profession at the convent, which exhibits the motherly interest she felt in her niece. In this letter she warns her against imprudent intimacies whether with priests or seculars. "If I ever hear of your contracting such intimacies," she says, "I will give you such a penance as, whether you like it or not, you will remember all your life." Then she speaks of the visits of strangers: "If they have anything to say, let them say it to the Prioress; do not you stir to go to them unless the Prioress send you, and then be as savage as a hedgehog. And when you go to confession, confess your sins, and having received your penance, retire.[1] Do not be surprised at my speaking thus, for the company of those most falsely called *devotees* corrupts the rules and usages of the religious life. Be on your guard, then, never to let your heart be tied to any one but Jesus crucified; otherwise when you would wish to untie it, you will not be able to succeed without much difficulty. The soul that is fed on the Bread of angels sees that all these things are obstacles. Seek rather all that will unite you to God, and the best of all means is prayer." She then gives her a long and beautiful instruction on the three kinds of prayer, namely, a recollection of the presence of God, vocal, and mental prayer. Of vocal prayer, including the recital of the office, she says, "We should use it in such a way as that, when the lips speak, the heart is not far from God." She describes the diffi-

[1] "*Recevuta la penitenza, fugge.*" The severe expressions here used may be understood as in part directed against the Fraticelli, a dangerous and insidious sect who at that time made it their business to find their way into the parlours of convents, for the purposes of spreading their pernicious doctrines among the nuns. St. Catherine had many encounters with these gentry, and her letters are full of allusions to them. Eugenia died young, like so many of her family. At the Chapter held at her convent in 1387, her name does not occur in the list of the community.

culties which often beset the soul in mental prayer, such as combats, weariness and confusion of mind; but warns her niece not on that account to abandon it, because by these struggles God will fortify the soul and make it constant; and if we gain nothing else we get to know our own nothingness; whilst God on His part will not fail to accept and bless our good resolutions. "Prayer of this sort," she says, "will teach you to love your rule, it will seal in your heart the three solemn vows of your profession, and engrave there the determination to observe them even until death. Let me then see you a precious jewel in the presence of God, and have the consolation of knowing that I have not lost my time." [1]

In the narrative of the visit to St. Agnes's body the reader will have noticed that the name of Lisa once more occurs. She had returned to Siena after her husband's death, and putting on the habit of Penance, thenceforth made her home with Lapa and Catherine. The three are named together in a document dated 1378, as taxed by the Commune for the sum of six hundred lire.[2] On Lisa were settled as her marriage dowry the farm and vineyard belonging to the Benincasa family at San Rocco a Pili.[3] Catherine often visited this spot, which is situated about five miles out of the city on the Grosseto road. Caffarini in his Supplement relates the circumstances of one of these visits, when Catherine came thither at Lisa's earnest solicitation to recruit her strength, she being at the time in a very suffering state. Having reached the farm, Catherine had so sharp an attack of her habitual pain in the side, as to be unable to leave the house all that day and the following night. Next morning, desiring to receive Holy Communion, she rose, and went to the little parish church hard by. But presently she bethought herself that

[1] Letter 159.

[2] Burlamacchi's Notes to the Legend.

[3] Sano di Maco was Procurator to Lisa in a money transaction regarding this property, the document relating to which is preserved in the *Libro delle Denunzie di Dogano* (*Diario Sanese*, ii., 100). Gigli calls the parish *S. Rocco*, Grottanelli, *Santa Maria a Pili*. At present (he says) it bears the name of S. Bartolomeo.

she was perhaps guilty of presumption in thus approaching the altar without having previously been to confession. She therefore presented herself to the priest for absolution, and at the moment of receiving it felt herself bathed anew in the Blood of Jesus. Rapt in ecstasy she communicated, and remained so abstracted, praying for her confessor and her disciples by name. Raymund and one of his companions were at that moment in the convent of Siena; but feeling a sudden and sensible visitation of Divine grace, they said one to another, "Catherine must be praying for us!" and found afterwards that it had been even so.[1]

The memory of St. Catherine is still preserved in this place, which is commonly called *Il Podere di Lisa*, or *Lisa's farm*, and bears an inscription, recording its connection with St. Catherine. It was long the custom for the Rogation Processions to make a station on the spot, when the priest would exhort the people to offer special prayers for a blessing on their parish, on this ground once sanctified by the footsteps of the holy virgin of Siena.[2] And here we may observe that these Rogation Processions were in Catherine's time ceremonies of great splendour and importance, at which all the clergy and citizens assisted, nor is it to be doubted that the Saint herself was accustomed to take part in these beautiful devotions of her native city. Each day the crimson banner of the Duomo led the way out of one or other of the city gates, the procession making a circuit of many miles to bless the fields and vineyards of the outlying territory. Those who were too old or feeble to undertake so fatiguing an expedition, waited at the gates for the return of the banner; none ever dreamed of absenting themselves altogether. One beautiful custom existed of holding the consecrated banner across the street at certain spots where, according to tradition, pagan monuments formerly stood, in order that all the people might pass under it, and so offer their protest against the worship of the false gods, and render their homage instead to the symbol of Christianity. On the first day the procession went forth through the Porta Camollia, saluting as they passed the ancient

[1] Latin Sup., Part 2, Trat. 6, art.

[2] Diar. San. ii. 100.

image of our Lady which stood there, and being careful to take the road through the chestnut woods of Montagnuola, that the chestnuts might be well blessed. On Tuesday they took a southerly direction, going out of the Porta Pispini through the suburban parish of St. Eugenia; on Wednesday they issued forth by the Porta Tufi, through the beautiful fields whence are seen the mountain district and the peaks of Monte Amiata, together with the valleys watered by the Orcia, and the distant Maremma. Gigli, who preserves these details, tells us that the Sienese kept the Rogation days as solemn holydays, and even gives us to understand that they observed what St. Cesarius of Arles had prescribed regarding them, namely, that on these solemnities no man should either be bled or take medicine, unless in great danger; probably in order that none might thereby be prevented from joining in these devout processions.

One other locality must be named in the vicinity of Siena where Catherine often retired; it was the hospice belonging to the Dominican Fathers at St. Quirico in Osenna, twenty-four miles out of the city on the Roman road. It is situated on a hill between the Orcia and the Ombrone, and from it is dated one of the Saint's letters to F. Thomas della Fonte. In the peace and silence of that beautiful retreat she pours forth some of the most exquisite of her impassioned words. Yet she begins by accusing herself of caring so little for God's honour, and thinking so seldom of His teaching. "I ought to live dead to my own will," she says, "and yet I have not subjected it to the yoke of obedience half so much as I could and ought to have done." Then she proceeds to speak of that transformation of the soul in God which is wrought by this conformity of our will with His: "O Love! Sweet Love!" she continues; "enlarge our memory to receive, to contain, to comprehend all Thy goodness; for when we comprehend it, we shall love it, and by loving it we shall be united to it, and so, transformed in charity, we shall pass through the door of Jesus crucified, according to His words to His disciples, 'I will come, and make My abode with you.' You tell me in your letter," she adds, "that you have been to visit the body of St.

Agnes (at Montepulciano), and that you have recommended us to her and to all the religious, which much consoles me; and you say that you know not why, but that you have no wish to return thither. I reply, there may be many reasons for this; one is, that a soul really united to God, and transformed in Him, readily forgets itself and all creatures. May this be so with you."—(Letter 105.)

Catherine often returned to Montepulciano, and corresponded with the Prioress and other members of the community; and there are no tenderer allusions in her letters than those which refer to "her St. Agnes," as she calls the convent. At the time of her first visit in 1374 it was situated at some distance from the town, but a few years later the unsettled state of that mountain district rendered it necessary for the nuns to seek safety by transferring their residence within the walls; and as the requisite expenses were beyond their means, St. Catherine applied to Ricasoli, Archbishop of Florence, who had promised to give her the first alms she wished to bestow. "Since you are the father of the poor," she writes, "and since you have made me promise to address myself to you the first time I wished to bestow an alms, I will fulfil my promise, for there is a very pressing alms I want to make to the convent of St. Agnes. They must be transferred within the walls on account of the wars; but they want fifty gold florins to begin with, the town will do the rest. I beg of you, therefore, help them if you can."

The secret of Catherine's great love for this community lay in the revelation which had been granted her, that in heaven she should enjoy a degree of bliss equal to that of St. Agnes; and that they should be companions throughout eternity. It is a beautiful, and perhaps an unique passage in the lives of the saints. It gives us a glimpse of something beyond even the hope that shattered links of human affection will be reunited and purified in another life. It reveals to us the saints in glory endowed with the capacity, in some unspeakable way, of drawing near one to another in God, bound by the ties of a new and unearthly friendship. Nor, as we may safely infer, could such a trait be found

in the history one the chords of whose heart did not respond to that note of sublimised human affection; Catherine on earth knew how to practise her own doctrine of never removing the vase from the fountain which supplied it; and there was reserved for her in heaven to drink from the abundant torrents of sweetness which water the courts of the eternal mansions.

It would seem that these journeys to Montepulciano in 1374 had a double object; and that, besides the family affairs which often took her to the convent, Catherine was also bent on the reconciliation of certain feuds for which her mediation had been solicited. However, on this, as on many like occasions, her departure from Siena gave rise to jealousies and suspicions on the part of the magistrates. They had moreover some difficult business of the same kind on their hands just then which they despaired of bringing to a favourable issue without her help; and evil tongues, always busy with their criticisms on her doings, filled their ears with murmurs and complaints. So at last the Signoria despatched her disciple, Thomas Guelfaccio, with a message bidding her return, as she was greatly wanted in Siena. Catherine, however, was equally proof against their flattery and the fear of their displeasure. "You desire my return," she says in her reply, "and ask my advice how to obtain peace. I am incapable of the least good, but I shall bow my head whenever God wills me to obey you, for of course I must place the will of God before that of man. At present I do not see that I can possibly return, for I have still an important business to negotiate for the nuns of St. Agnes, and I am here with the nephews of Messer Spinello, in order to make peace with the sons of Lorenzo. I regret the trouble my fellow-citizens take in judging me; it really seems as if they had nothing else to do than to speak evil of me and my companions. In my case they are right, for I am full of faults, but they are wrong in their judgment of the others. However, we shall overcome all things with patience."

It was at Montepulciano that two events took place which are related by Raymund in the Legend as "occurring in the beginning of their acquaintance." He had heard many marvellous

things concerning her, which he hesitated to believe, and desired, as her confessor, to put them to the proof by some infallible test. "I remembered," he says, "that we were living in the time of the third beast with the skin of a leopard, whereby is denoted hypocrites, and in my day I had met with plenty of persons, specially women, easily deceived like their first mother." The test he resolved on was to desire that by her intercession she should obtain for him such a perfect contrition for his sins as he never before had, and that he might also have some token that the same had been procured by her means; for he was assured that the devil could not be the author of such contrition, and that it is not in the power of any man, but of God only, to touch and move the heart to conceive such sorrow. With this purpose, therefore, he went to Catherine, and asked her to do him a pleasure. "What is it?" she asked. "None other than this," he replied, "that you will pray to your Spouse for me, that of His mercy He will pardon me all my sins." She answered that she would cheerfully do what he asked, as one who felt no doubt of obtaining her request. "But," said Raymund, "this is not enough. I must have a full pardon and bull drawn after the manner of the court of Rome." She asked his meaning. "The bull I desire," he said, "is that I may feel a deep and true contrition." At these words she gave him a sweet and penetrating look which seemed to betoken that she had read the secret thoughts of his heart. "Have no fear," she said, "you shall have the bull you ask for." And so they parted, for it was towards evening, and the friars lodged at a house separate from the monastery. The next morning Raymund found himself too unwell to leave the house, and so remained in his apartments together with his companion, Brother Nicolas of Pisa,[1] the same who has before

[1] This brother Nicolas da Cascina finds honourable mention in the Chronicle of St. Caterina of Pisa as a man of signal virtue. He was a man of austere life, chastising his body, and often spending entire nights watching and praying in the church. He was as learned as he was humble, and a model of religious obedience. At his death, which took place on the vigil of Pentecost, the angels are said to have visibly assisted.

been named as having travelled from Pisa to Siena for the sole purpose of seeing the Saint. Catherine, understanding in spirit that he was ill, said to her companion: "F. Raymund is ill; let us go and see him." They went, therefore, and entering his apartment somewhat suddenly, she approached the couch where he lay, and asked him how he found himself. Then entering into discourse she began to speak of God, of His benefits to His creatures, and of their ungrateful return for all His goodness, with such grace and unction, that, as he listened, Raymund felt his heart moved as it had never been before. And all the time he never thought of the bull he had asked for, but was wholly carried away by the force and efficacy of her words. They pierced his heart like sharp darts, and wakened such a sense of his past sins as never in his life had he experienced until that moment. For he seemed to see himself arraigned, as it were, before the tribunal of God, and confessed in himself that he was worthy of everlasting punishment. Then when this terrible thought had lasted a good space, he seemed to behold our Lord as a pitiful Father, clothing His nakedness with His own robes, leading him into His house, giving him to eat at His table, and accepting him as one of His own servants. And so considering both the deformity of his sins, and the merciful goodness of our Saviour who received him again so lovingly, he burst into tears, and continued weeping and sobbing as though his heart would break. Catherine, who had watched the whole matter, and who understood well enough what was passing in his heart, when she saw the medicine begin to work, held her peace, and let him weep on undisturbed. At last he suddenly remembered within himself what had passed between them the day before, and turning to her he said: "Ah, daughter, is this the bull I asked for yesterday?" "Even so," she replied; then rising she touched him lightly on the shoulder saying, "Forget not the benefits of God," and departed, leaving him and Nicolas much consoled and edified.

He tells us of another token of her sanctity, which was given to him without his having asked for it, and at the same monastery. It happened that she was suffering much from her accustomed

infirmities, and was lying on her little couch, when having received certain high revelations, she sent to Raymund, praying him to come at once that she might communicate the same to him. "When he heard the things that she reported, and reflected on the greatness of the same in comparison to what he had read of other saints, he said to himself, 'Is it possible that all this should be true that she saith?' And with that, looking steadfastly upon her, he saw her face suddenly transformed into the face of a Man, who likewise set His eyes steadfastly upon him, and gave him a marvellous dreadful look. The Face that he saw was somewhat long; it appeared to be that of a man of middle age; His beard was somewhat of the colour of ripe wheat, that is, between red and yellow, His countenance was very comely reverend, and full of majesty. And for a little time he saw that Face only, and could see none other thing, which put him in such a fear and terror that, casting up his hands above his shoulders, he cried with a loud voice, and said, 'O Lord, who is this that looketh thus upon me?' 'It is He,' said she, 'that is.' And with that she came again to her own form."[1] "At the same moment," he writes, "my understanding was illuminated with an abundant light on the matter of our discourse. I had indeed been before incredulous, but our Lord had come and manifested to me His own Face, that I might no longer doubt Who it was Who spoke in her. As Thomas, after he had received the token which he had demanded, exclaimed, saying, 'My Lord and my God!' so I also, after this vision, exclaimed to myself, Verily, this is indeed the spouse and disciple of my Lord and God. And I declare these things that my readers may understand that our Lord displayed His doctrine in her as in a vessel frail and weak indeed by nature, but by His power miraculously made strong."[2]

[1] Fen., Part I, ch. xxiv. [2] Legend, Part I, ch. ix.

CHAPTER XVII

Beati Pacifici

IN following thus far the course of Catherine's history we have chiefly been engaged with its domestic aspect, and have sought to unravel the narrative as it has been given to us by Raymund, supplementing it, where defective, by the abundant testimony of her other biographers and disciples. Her life, however, was something more than a series of charming stories and supernatural favours. The graces which were poured out on her with such magnificent profuseness were given to her not for herself alone, but for others. Called to a special work and a wholly exceptional mission, she was designed by God to be a chosen vessel to carry His name before princes and nations.[1] And that misson, as was fitting and natural, she began among her own people.

Surrounded, therefore, by the group of faithful disciples whom we have described in a former chapter, and to whose ranks fresh accessions daily flowed, Catherine accepted the work which Divine Providence presented to her, and applied herself to it with that earnestness mingled with simplicity which marked her whole career. If that career were strange and unprecedented for a woman to follow, this, at least, is worthy of remark, that there is no single example to be found of her ever taking on herself any duty (beyond those ordinary good works open to all devout women) without solicitation or command. On the contrary, there is abundant proof of the reluctance with which she invariably hung back from the efforts made on the part of the world to draw her from her retirement. But when the multitude sought

[1] Acts ix. 15.

her out in her humble chamber in the Fullonica, she did not refuse to listen to their sorrows and to heal their discords, nor did she hesitate to use the marvellous but unstudied eloquence both of tongue and of pen which God had bestowed upon her, to deliver His message to men of all conditions. Catherine was a true Italian and a true Dominican also. She loved her country, and names it in her letters with unmistakable tenderness, and she inherited the traditions of an Order, one of whose chief works in the early centuries of its existence had been the healing of party feuds. Everywhere throughout Italy the friars appeared as the apostles of peace; we need but mention the names of John of Salerno, Latino Malabranca, and Bernard di Guido, to remind the reader of those tales of wondrous and pathetic beauty which exhibit to us the sons of St. Dominic in the character of the blessed peacemakers. And surely no portion of their apostolic mission could fall more fitly or gracefully than this to the share of a religious woman. How could she come in contact with such a soul as that of James Tolomei without conceiving a detestation for those habits and social maxims so deeply rooted in the hearts of her countrymen, that crime had ceased to be regarded as crime, and a youth before he had attained to manhood could boast of the blood which he had shed, just as some wild Indian might exhibit and number up the scalps of his victims? "The hatreds of the Middle Ages," says Capecelatro, "had a vigour and tenacity in them unknown in our days, when base cowardice sometimes disguises itself under the mask of gentle manners. The superabundant life of those times, when men seemed full of young blood, and which when directed to Christian practice produced such prodigies of charity, betrayed itself also in those deadly hatreds which resisted even the instincts of faith then so powerful in society. The customs of their old heathen and barbarian ancestors had not entirely decayed, so that the supreme moment of life, blessed and sanctified by the last offices of religion, was often chosen as a time for securing that the dying sinner's thirst for vengeance should last beyond the tomb. Horrible oaths sealed these iniquitous compacts; the Almighty, the Father of

mercy and of pardon, was called to witness the work of blood, and sons believed themselves bound to discharge the infamous obligation as a sacred inheritance from their fathers."[1] Yet the men who made up such a society were Christians; they believed in God, and expected to be pardoned through the Blood of His Son; they probably from time to time recited their chaplet, and asked to be forgiven even as they forgave; and saw no inconsistency with such words upon their lips in handing on from father to son a legacy of revenge and homicide.

When such men heard of the holy maid of the Fullonica ("*La Beata Popolana*," as the citizens loved to call her—proud of her plebeian birth), they often enough came, now with one of her disciples, and now with another, to behold the prodigy of Siena. And when Catherine began to speak to such souls, she had in the most literal sense of the word to "lay again the foundation of penance from dead works . . . and the doctrine . . . of eternal judgment."[2] We will give one example of the kind of men with whom she had to deal, and of her method of addressing herself to their hearts. There were two nobles, Benuccio and Bernard, members of the haughty family of the Belforti. They belonged to the Guelph faction, and reckoned among their kinsmen not fewer than nineteen valiant warriors. They were the hereditary lords of Volterra, in whose historic annals the most heroic deeds of valour and patriotism were often enough mingled with tales of treachery and assassination. Bochino, the head of the family, was himself afterwards slain with many of his faction. His brother Pietro was married to Angela Salimbeni, one of that illustrious family with whom Catherine was on intimate terms, and Benuccio and Bernard were their sons. At her urgent request, it would seem, Catherine undertook to address the two brothers and remind them that they were Christians. But before we quote her words to the two warriors, let us hear in what terms she consoles Donna Benedetta, the wife of Bochino, when she was mourning over the loss of several much-loved children:—"My dearest mother and sister in Jesus Christ," she says, "is

[1] Storia di St. Cath., Lib. 2. [2] Heb. vi. 1, 2.

it not sweet to you to think that the heavenly Physician came into this world to heal all our infirmities? And like a good physician, He is often obliged to give us a bitter medicine, and even to bleed us sometimes, in order to restore our health. You know a sick person will endure anything in hope of being cured. Alas! why do we not treat the Physician of Heaven as we do the physician of earth? He does not wish the death of the sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. And so He puts a bitterness into the things of sense. And He bleeds us too, when He takes from us our children, our health, our worldly goods, or whatever else He thinks best. Courage then; what He has done, He has done to heal, and not to slay; and since it is the sweet will of God, clothe yourself with patience. As to the other son who is left to you, you must try not to look on him as something that belongs to you, for that would be to appropriate to yourself what is not really yours, but only lent. You know I am speaking the truth, and because these things are only lent, not given to us, we must be ready to give them back to our sweet Master Who gave them and Who created them. When I heard that He had called them to Himself, I rejoiced at their salvation; and though I pitied you, yet I rejoiced at the fruit which you will draw from this affliction. Have courage then, the time is short, our sufferings are light, and the reward exceeding great. May the peace of God be with you. Catherine the useless servant salutes you."

No doubt when Catherine compared the anguish of Benedetta as she wept over her dead sons, with that which her kinswoman, Donna Angela, endured when she watched the career of her own living ones, she must have felt that bereavement was not the worst sorrow. They were steeped up to their eyes in deadly enmities, to lay aside any one of which would have been accounted a blot on their scutcheon. This was that grievous "point of honour," which the saints so fervidly denounced; not honour in its true and noble sense, but the false honour of the world, which at that time held a man disgraced if he did not seek to slaughter his enemy.

"My dearest sons," writes Catherine, "I desire to see your hearts and souls at peace with our crucified Jesus, otherwise you cannot be sharers in His grace. You know, my sons, that sin establishes a feud between man and his Creator. When the whole human race was at enmity with God through the sin of Adam, our merciful Creator desired to make peace with man, and sent us His only Son to be our Peace and our Mediator, and He became so by bearing all our iniquities in His own Body on the Cross. You see, then, that God has made peace with man, and that so perfectly that even if man revolt against Him, he can always find the precious Blood again in holy confession, which we may make use of every day if we choose . . . But know this, we cannot love God except through our neighbour. Christ asked Peter if he loved Him, and when he said 'Yes,' our Lord replied, 'Then, feed My sheep.' As much as to say, it is very little to Me that you love Me, unless you love your neighbour. And this is the way of putting an end to the great feud we have with God. For our crucified Jesus came into the world to extinguish the fire of hatred between man and his brother. Yes, my dear children, I want to see hatred disappear out of your hearts. Do not act as madmen do, who by seeking to injure others only injure themselves. He who kills his enemy kills himself first, and with the same poniard, for he dies to grace. Fear the Divine judgments then, hanging over you, and promise me two things: Be reconciled both to God and to your enemies; you cannot have peace with God unless you have peace with your neighbour; and, then, come and see me as soon as you can; if it were not so difficult for me to do so, I would come and see you."

We do not know the result of this appeal, or whether the sweet echo of that word *peace* found an entrance into the heart of the Belforti; but having seen in what way she sought to win these turbulent spirits by her words, it may be well to show her gaining one such soul by the simple power of her prayers. The story is thus beautifully told in the old English Legend.

"There was in the city of Siena a gentleman called Nanni di

Ser Vanni,[1] who bore a great sway among the people, being a very fierce and warlike man, and also of a marvellous subtle and crafty wit in worldly affairs. This Nanni, with the rest of his family and friends, maintained a faction and perpetual quarrel among certain other families in the city, who, dreading his power and policy, sought by all means and with great submission to make their peace with him. He made them answer that it was all one to him whether they had peace or no peace, and that for his own part he was very ready and willing to come to terms if they would win certain others to it, who were as much concerned in it as he was himself. And thus he gave them very fair words, and put them in hope of peace; but in the meantime he dealt secretly with those other persons, bidding them stand stiffly to it, and in nowise to condescend to any conditions of peace. This matter came to the ears of Catherine, who seeing herein the occasion of working a charitable work, sought by many means to speak with him. But whenever he understood that she was coming towards him, he fled from her, as a serpent is wont to flee from the enchanter that comes to charm him. At last, by the importunity of a holy hermit, Brother William the Englishman,[2] they won so much of him that he was content to hear the holy maid speak, but yet with this protest, that whatever she said concerning the peace, he was fixed, and would not be moved. With this resolution he went to Catherine's house at a time when she chanced to be abroad. F. Raymund, by the providence of God, was there at that time, who, understanding that Nanni was coming, was very glad of it, for he knew that the holy maid had

[1] Mrs. Butler, in her life of St. Catherine, has confused Nanni di Ser Vanni with Andrea Vanni the painter. They were two totally distinct persons. She even imagines that Father William Flete's acquaintance with Nanni was formed on occasion *of having his portrait painted*, the last notion that would probably have occurred to the good hermit. Nanni really belonged to the noble house of Savini; Vanni was not his family name, but the Christian name of his father, and he bore it according to the Italian custom of those times, just as Stephen Maconi is called *Stephen di Corrado*, and Neri dei Paglieresi appears as *Neri di Landoccio*. For an account of the Savini family, see *Diar. San.* ii. 162.

[2] *i.e.* Father William Flete.

a great desire to speak with him; so he went out to meet and entertain him until her return. When they were come into the house, F. Raymund led the way to the holy maid's chapel or oratory, where he caused him to sit down, and entered on such talk with him as he thought most convenient to protract the time. But after they had sat there a little while, and saw that she came not, Nanni thought the time long, and therefore began to break the matter with F. Raymund after this manner: 'Father,' he said, 'I promised Brother William that I would come here and speak with this holy maid; but now seeing she is abroad about some other business, and I have at this present certain affairs that must needs be despatched out of hand, I pray you excuse me unto her, and tell her that I would gladly have spoken with her if she had been at home.' F. Raymund was very sorry that Catherine came not. However, to gain a little more time, he took occasion to talk with him concerning the peace, and asked him how the matter stood between such and such persons. Whereunto he made answer after this manner: 'Father,' said he, 'to you who are a priest and religious, and to this blessed maid, of whom I hear report of great virtue and holiness, I will speak no lies, but tell you plainly and sincerely how the case stands between these men. It is true that I am he who hinders this reconciliation, though indeed it seem otherwise, because the matter is openly contrived by others, but I alone privily maintain and uphold one side; and if I would give my consent to the peace, the matter were ended. But to tell you my meaning in few words, my peace shall be made and confirmed with the blood of my enemies. This is my resolution, and from this I will not be moved. Wherefore, I pray you, set your hearts at rest, and trouble me no more.' And with that he rose up and took his leave to depart; but F. Raymund was very loath to let him go, and therefore, though he saw that he was unwilling to tarry, or to hear any more words of that matter, yet to gain more time, he asked him divers and sundry questions, and by that means kept him there so long that Catherine was come home and entered into the house before he could get out of the oratory. When Nanni saw her, he was sorry that he had

tarried so long. But she was right glad to see him there, and bade him welcome after a very charitable and loving manner, and caused him to sit down again. And when he was seated, she asked him the cause of his coming. He answered her, and declared so much in effect as he had declared before to F. Raymund; at the same time protesting that concerning that matter of the peace he would have no talk, for he was absolutely bent to the contrary. The holy maid hearing that, began to exhort him to brotherly love and concord, and showed him withal what a dangerous and damnable state they were in that lived out of charity. But he gave a deaf ear to her words, which she perceived well enough, and therefore she sat still, and spake no more to him. But casting up her eyes and heart to God, she besought His grace and mercy for that hard-hearted man. When F. Raymund, who had evermore a diligent eye to the holy maid, had espied that, he spoke some words to Nanni to occupy him the while, nothing doubting but that she should work a better effect in him by that silent prayer than both he and she had done before with many words. And so indeed it proved; for within a little time after, he spoke to them both after this manner: 'It shall not be said of me that I am so hard and untractable that I will have my own way in all things and relent in nothing. I will condescend to your mind in some one thing, and then I will take my leave of you. I have four quarrels in the city, of which I am content to put one into your hands. Do in it what you shall think good; make you my peace, and I will abide your orders.' With that he rose up, and would have gone his way; but on rising, being inwardly touched, he said these words to himself: 'O Lord, what comfort is this that I feel at this instant in my soul upon the only naming of this word "peace"!' And soon after he said again: 'O Lord, O God! what virtue or strength is this that holdeth and draweth me after this sort! I have no power to go hence. I can deny you nothing that you require me. O Lord! O Lord! what thing may this be that thus enforceth me?' And with that he burst out into weeping, and said: 'I am quite overthrown. I am not able to make any longer resist-

ance.' Then suddenly he cast himself down at Catherine's feet, and with marvellous great submission and abundance of tears, said these words: 'O blessed maid, I am ready to do whatsoever you command me, not only in this matter of peace, but also in all other things whatsoever they be. Hitherto I know well the devil has led me up and down fast tied in his chain, but now I am resolved to follow you whithersbever it shall please you to lead me; and therefore I pray you for charity's sake be you my guide, and teach me how I may deliver my soul out of his bonds.' At those words the holy maid turned to him and said, 'Brother, our Lord be thanked that you are now, through His great mercy, come to understand in how dangerous a state you stood. I spake to you concerning your soul's health, and you made light of my words. I spake to our Lord touching the same matter, and He was content to hear me. My advice therefore is, that you do penance for your sins in time, for fear of some sudden calamity that may fall upon you, which finding you unprovided, may otherwise bear you down and quite overwhelm you.' Nanni was so inwardly stricken with these words of the holy maid, that he went forthwith to Father Raymund and made a general confession of all his sins with great sorrow and contrition. And so, when he had made his peace with Almighty God, by the advice of F. Raymund and virtue of the holy Sacrament of Penance, he was content likewise to submit himself to the order of the holy maid, and according to her direction and arbitration to make a firm peace with all his enemies. Within a few days after Nanni was thus converted, it chanced that he was taken by the governor of the city and cast into a strait prison for certain outrages that he had committed before. And it was commonly said among the people that he should be put to death, the which when F. Raymund understood, he came to Catherine with a heavy cheer, and said, 'Lo, mother, so long as Nanni served the devil, so long did all things go prosperously with him. But now, since the time that he began to serve God, we see the world is wholly bent against him. This sudden alteration putteth me in great fear and doubt of the man, lest, being as yet but a young and

tender branch, he should be broken off by the violence of this storm, and so fall into despair. Wherefore I beseech you heartily, good mother, commend his state to God in your prayers, and as you have by your mediation delivered him from everlasting death, so do you endeavour also to deliver him from this temporal and imminent danger.' To that the holy maid made answer, saying, 'Father, why take you this matter so heavily? Methinks you should rather be glad of it, for by this you may conceive a very sure hope that our Lord hath pardoned him all his sins, and changed those everlasting pains that were due to him for the same into these temporal afflictions. When he was of the world, the world made much of him, as one that was his own; but now, since he began to spurn at the world, no wonder if the world should likewise kick at him again. As for the fear that you have, lest he, being overcome with these calamities, should fall into despair, be of good comfort, and assure yourself that the merciful goodness of our Lord, that hath delivered him out of the deep dungeon of hell, will not suffer him to perish in prison.' And as she said, so it proved indeed, for within a few days after he was delivered out of prison; his life was indeed spared, but for that they set a great fine of money on his head. Whereof the holy maid was nothing sorry but rather glad. 'For,' said she, 'our Lord hath mercifully taken away from him that poison with the which he had before and might again have poisoned himself.'"

Nanni was not ungrateful to her who had delivered him from his miserable bondage; and as soon as he regained his freedom he made over to her by deed of gift his great castle of Belcaro, about four miles out of Siena, that she might convert it into a convent. And this, as we shall show, she did a little later, dedicating it under the title of Our Lady of Angels.

It was not long before Catherine acquired such a reputation for success in the reconciliation of long-standing family feuds, that appeals were made to her arbitration from all quarters. As at Montepulciano, so also at Asciano, Semignano, and other of the towns and villages in the vicinity of Siena, there are indications in her letters of her exercising the good office of an angel of

peace; reconciling enemies, and not unfrequently administering some well-earned rebukes.

At Semignano, a village about a mile out of Siena, two priests were themselves engaged in a deadly feud against each other, and St. Catherine was appealed to, to put a stop if possible to this frightful scandal. She wrote to one of them, and if her words are terrible in their severity, there is evidence that they were every whit deserved by the offender. It is thus that she addresses him: "Priest! whom the august Sacrament which it is yours to administer renders dear to me, I, Catherine, the slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write to you in His Precious Blood, desiring to see you a vessel of election, bearing worthily the name of Christ, and applying yourself to live in peace with your Creator and to make peace between His creatures. That is your duty, and you ought to fulfil it. If you do not do it, God will reprove you with severity. Respect the exalted dignity of your state. God in His mercy has appointed you to administer the fire of Divine Charity, I mean the Body and Blood of Jesus crucified. Oh think, the angelic nature enjoys not that honour: do but consider, He has put His Word into your soul as into a sacred vessel. You represent the person of Christ when you consecrate His Sacrament. Therefore, you should love and reverence your dignity with great purity and with a peaceful heart, tearing out from your soul every hatred and desire of vengeance.

"Alas! where is now the purity of God's ministers! You require a spotless purity in the chalice you make use of at the altar, and refuse to use one that is soiled; remember then, that God, the Sovereign Truth, demands a like purity in your soul. Woe is me! on all sides we behold the contrary. Those who should be the temples of God are the stables of swine: they carry the fire of hatred and vengeance, and an evil will in their souls. They forget that God sees them, and that His eye is ever over them, penetrating to the bottom of their hearts. Alas! Alas! Are we brutes without reason? One would say so, when one sees how we abandon ourselves to our wicked passions. The

pride of man is now so great that he will not humble himself either to God or creatures. If any one injures him or threatens him with death, he will not pardon his enemy, and yet desires and expects that his own sins against God shall be pardoned. But he deceives himself; for with the same measure that he metes to others he shall be measured himself. . . . I wonder how a man like you, whom God has drawn out of the world and made an earthly angel by making him the minister of His Sacrament,—I do wonder how you can hate. I know not how you dare to celebrate, I declare to you that if you persevere in this hatred, and in your other vices, the wrath of God will burst over your head. Let there be an end of this, reform your life, and cast out from your heart all this misery, and, above all, this deadly hate. I desire that you be both reconciled. What a disgrace to see two priests engaged in deadly hatred! It is a marvel to me that God does not command the earth to open and swallow you both up. But courage! there is yet time, have recourse to Jesus, and He will receive you if you will but go to Him. If not, you will be punished like the wicked servant, who, after he had been forgiven by his master, refused to forgive his fellow servant a paltry debt, and tried to strangle him. Then his master revoked his pardon, and bade them bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. Our sweet Jesus left us those words as a warning to those who lived in the hatred of God and their neighbour. I will say no more; but reply to me, and tell me what is your will and intention. May you abide in the love of God!"[1]

Such a letter as the foregoing suggests the answer to a question which inevitably presents itself when we read of the kind of work which fell into the hands of St. Catherine. How was it that in a Christian land the word of a *woman* should have been needed

[1] At Semignano, the residence of the unhappy man to whom this letter was addressed, there now stands the magnificent villa of Cetinale, where Alexander VII. was wont to spend his hours of learned retirement. In a chapel in this villa is preserved, among other relics, a bone of St. Catherine of Siena. She has a worthy claim to be venerated on that spot.

to bring men to penance? were there not Priests, Bishops, Pastors of souls? Alas! it must be said: at this precise epoch the deepest and deadliest of all the wounds which were lacerating society was the corruption of manners among the clergy. Most religious orders were in a state of relaxation, and the example of the court at Avignon had spread among the prelates of the Church, to say the least, habits of worldly ease and luxury which cried aloud for reform. Not to state this fact plainly would be to omit what alone explains, and we may say *justifies*, many of St. Catherine's acts and words; a fact also which alone can enable us to comprehend how such events as the Great Schism in the fourteenth century, and the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth, could ever have come about.

This terrible wound of the Church lay open to Catherine's eyes, and we see by her writings that she had probed it to its depths. It formed one part of her lifelong martyrdom to know all that she did know of the lives led by those whom, in her intense and living faith, she could think of only as "the Ministers of the Blood." If to love God and see Him offended be anguish to a loving soul, what must it have been to see every abomination of desolation brought even into the sanctuary? It caused her a horror which inspired her most burning words. "How!" she exclaims, "God has not yet commanded the ground to open, or wild beasts to devour you: He still bids the earth yield you its fruits, and the sun to shed on you its warmth and light. The heavens still roll on in their course, that you may live and have time to repent; and all this He does out of love!" Again and again she reminds the priest and prelate to whom she bears the message of her Master that they are consecrated chalices, —channels to convey to souls the ever-flowing torrents of the Precious Blood; and alas! reminds them, too, what kind of sacrilege it is to soil the sacred vessels of the sanctuary with the iniquities of avarice and sensuality. Hence she was ever praying for the *reform* of the Church; a word which has been laid hold of by some writers as indicating that the Saint of Siena may be claimed as one of those precursors of the so-called Reformation,

among whom are to be numbered such luminaries as Huss and Wickliffe. One passage of her own writing will be the best answer to this extravagant theory, and sufficiently explains in what sense she makes use of a word destined in after ages to bear so questionable a reputation; "Strengthen yourself," she writes, "in the sweet Spouse of Christ. The more tribulation and sorrow abound, the more does the Divine Truth promise an abundance of sweetness and consolation; and this sweetness will be in the renewal of good and holy pastors, who like glorious flowers will offer to God the good odour of virtue. For this reform will only be in the ministers and pastors: *the Church herself has no need of being reformed, for the fruit she gives can never be spoiled nor diminished by the sins of her ministers.*"[1]

In addition to what has already been said of the demands made on Catherine as a healer of feuds, there were other sources of trouble and civil distraction which naturally arose out of a society seething with successive revolutions. In the purely political side of these matters Catherine took no part; nevertheless the tumults and popular changes of the republic always brought to her door some new work of charity. She was not one to harangue mobs, or take on herself the part of a politician, but when the excitement was over, she was ever at hand to soothe the susceptibilities which had been roused, and bring comfort to many a wounded heart. Thus, when in 1373 the populace clamoured for the blood of Vico di Mugliano, senator of Siena, who had earned their hatred by hanging a good many public malefactors and banishing others, Catherine was ready with her words of consolation to support his terrified wife, who in her dismay had sent her word that she had no other hope than in the holy virgin's prayers.

Daughter of the people as she truly was, she never shrank from giving her sympathy to the victims of the revolutionary government, whose leaders were not long in power before they showed themselves in the light of cruel tyrants. The state prisons were filled with unhappy beings, whose crimes were of no blacker

[1] Letter 90.

dye than those of Agnolo d'Andrea, condemned to death for giving a banquet to which none of the "Riformatori" had been invited. But even into those darksome dungeons the charity of Catherine penetrated. On a certain Holy Thursday, when full of the thought of the Passion of her Lord, the solemn celebration of which is just then commencing, her heart wanders away to those forlorn ones whom she had already doubtless visited; and she strives to render their sufferings more tolerable to them by reminding them of One, who for their sakes had suffered torture and imprisonment. "O my sweet Love, Jesus!" she exclaims, "did not *You* endure for us opprobrium and ill treatment? were *You* not bound and buffeted and scourged at the column, tied and nailed to the cross, drenched with ignominies, tormented with thirst; and for Your relief they gave You nothing but vinegar and gall, and You bore it all with patience, and prayed for Your murderers? O unutterable mercy! You not only prayed for them, but excused them, too, saying, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Oh, my children, it is impossible that you should not bear your misfortunes patiently; for in the memory of the Blood all bitter things become sweet, and all hard things easy. Remember that you have to die, and you know not when; prepare then by confession and Communion, that after death you may rise again to grace with Christ Jesus."

These victims, whether of justice or state tyranny, were the objects of her peculiar tenderness. She saw in them the likeness of her adorable Master, as He passed to Calvary loaded with chains to die between two malefactors. Hence she was no stranger to the "Giustizia," or place of public execution; many a time had she taken her place in the grim procession as it set out from the Piazza of the Old Market, and leaving the city by the Porta Della Giustizia, made its way through the Val di Montone and ascended the little hill called the Corposanto a Pecorile, opposite to which was the church of St. Stefano, where the bodies of those executed were buried.[1] Those who would venerate each footprint left by Catherine of Siena, should follow that track with

[1] See Grottanelli's notes to *Leggenda Minore*, p. 53.

a kind of awful reverence. She came thither not once, but often; Simon of Cortona tells us in his deposition that she converted, and brought to confession, many who were led to execution in a desperate state; and Caffarini declares that he could not number the occasions when she gave help to the dying; whether those who had been slain by their enemies, or those who paid the penalty of their crimes on the public scaffold. Of the first-named act of charity no example has been preserved, but one is recorded of the second, and by no other than her own pen.

A young knight of Perugia, named Nicholas di Toldo, was accused of having spoken against the Riformatori, and advised his friends in Siena to shake off their odious yoke. He was arrested and condemned to death. The sentence fell on him like a thunderstroke and drove him to the madness of despair. Of noble birth and full of gallant hopes, with all his passions unsubdued, he could not resign himself to give up his life while yet the young blood was coursing through his veins, and the world spread itself before him as a fairy land of enjoyment. He had never cared for his religious duties, never even made his first Communion, so that when that terrible decree had gone forth, there was nothing to brighten the path that lay before him. A day or two more in his miserable dungeon, and when next he should be restored to the light of day that bright sun in which he had revelled would shine only on the black cart that would be carrying him to the gallows. In his utter misery he bethought him of Catherine; he had heard of her, but they had never met. Still, her name was in every one's mouth, and men said her power of consolation was something boundless; so, forsaken of every other hope, the unhappy youth despatched a messenger, and implored her to come to him in his prison. She came, and when the awful scene was over, she wrote the following narrative to Raymund of Capua.

"I went to see him whom you know of, and he was so cheered and encouraged that he confessed at once to F. Thomas, and showed the best dispositions possible. He made me promise, for the love of God, that when the time of execution came I would

be with him. I promised him, and I kept my promise. In the morning before the sound of the bell I hastened to him, and my arrival greatly comforted him. I took him to Mass, and he communicated for the first time in his life. He was perfectly resigned to God's will, and had no other fear than that his courage might forsake him at the last moment. But God in His goodness inspired him with such a love of His holy will that, penetrated with a sense of His adorable Presence, he kept repeating the words, 'Lord, be with me! Abandon me not, Thou art with me now, and all must go well with me! I die content!' Oh, how at that moment I longed to mingle my blood with his, and shed it all for our sweet Spouse Jesus! This desire increasing in me, and seeing my poor brother agitated by fear, I said to him: 'Courage, my brother! we shall soon be at the eternal nuptials. You are going to die washed in the adorable Blood of Jesus, and with His sweet Name upon your lips! I charge you forget it not, and I will wait for you at the place of execution.' Now think, my father, how his soul must have lost all fear; for his face was transformed from sadness to joy, and he said in a kind of transport, 'Whence comes such a grace to me as this, that the sweetness of my soul should wait for me at the holy place of execution!' You see what great light he must have had to have called the place of execution *holy*. Then he said: 'I shall go strong and full of joy; it seems to me as if I should have to wait a thousand years till I see you there;' and he added other words so sweet that I was amazed as I beheld the goodness of God.

"I went then to the place of execution, where I ceased not to invoke Our Lady and St. Catherine the martyr. But before he arrived, I knelt down and placed my own neck on the block, but alas! my desire was not fulfilled. Oh, how I prayed that Our Lady would obtain for him at that last moment light and peace of heart, and for me, the grace of seeing him attain his end. My heart was so full, and the impression of the promise I had received so deep, that in the midst of all that crowd of people I saw no one. At last he came, and like a meek lamb he smiled when he saw me, and desired I would make the sign of the cross

on his forehead. I did so, saying, 'Depart to the eternal nuptials; soon, very soon, you will be in the life that never ends.' He extended himself on the scaffold, and with my own hands I placed his head under the knife; then I knelt by his side, and reminded him of the Blood of the spotless Lamb. His lips murmured the words, 'Jesus and Catherine.' Then the knife fell, and I received his head in my hands. I fixed my eyes on the Divine goodness, and lo! I beheld, as clearly as one beholds the light of the sun, Him who is God and Man. He was there; and He received that blood. . . . He received it, and placed it in the open Wound of His Side, in the treasury of His mercy. . . . Oh, how lovingly He looked on that soul bathed in the blood made precious by being united to His own! Then Father, Son, and Holy Spirit received him; and he was inundated with a joy that would have ravished a thousand hearts. And then I saw him turn, as the bride does when she reaches the door of the bridegroom; she turns and bows her head to salute those who have conducted her there, and to give them a last farewell. Then all disappeared, and I felt a delicious peace, and the perfume of that blood was so sweet to me, that I would not suffer them to wash away what had fallen over me. Alas! miserable that I am, still to be left to linger in this wretched world!"[1]

[1] The last paragraph, which in the letter (Let. 97) is very obscure, receives a perfect explanation from the following passage in the *Leggenda Minore*. It will be remembered that the writer is F. Thomas Caffarini, who was present on this occasion.

"La quale disse poi al suo confessore, *e anco a noi altri*, che benche si fusse grande moltitudine di gente, essa non vedeva neuno. Ma ben vide Jesu Cristo benedetto che in virtù della sua santissima passione accettò il sangue di quello agnello ingiustamente sparto, con la sua volontà in tutto accordata con la volontà di Dio, a portare pazientamente questo martirio. Unde in quello punto introdusse quella benedetta anima nell 'eterno regno. *E prima che intrasse si rivolse dietro, inchinandosi alla vergine in segno di ringraziamento.* (Leg. Min., Part 2, chap. vii., p. 94). The date of Nicholas di Toldo's death is uncertain, but it occurred after the Saint had become acquainted with Raymund of Capua (to whom the letter describing his death is addressed), and therefore some time later than June 1374. It forms the subject of a fine fresco by Sodoma, in the chapel of St. Catherine in the Church of San Domenico.

At this most wonderful scene, F. Thomas Caffarini was personally present, and he has carefully described it in the Process. He says, at the moment when the axe fell, Catherine received the head in her hands, being in an ecstasy. Her eyes were fixed on heaven, and her eyelids motionless, and so she remained for a long space. The spectators were all in tears, and declared they were witnessing the death of a martyr rather than the execution of a criminal; while Catherine, heedless of all around her, was beholding in spirit the happy soul of him, whose blood was flowing over her garments, ascend to heaven, and before entering the eternal portals turn to give one last look of gratitude on her whose amazing charity had rescued him from perdition. "I saw it all," says Caffarini, "and never at the most solemn religious festival have I witnessed such devotion as there was displayed at his burial."

It must not be gathered from what has been said of Catherine's horror of feuds, or of her wondrous pity for criminals, that she was on the one hand deficient in that appreciation for brave men and brave deeds which finds a place in every woman's heart that is attuned to what is noble; or that, on the other hand, her compassion for the erring was akin to weakness. In the righteous cause of God or country, Catherine would have buckled on the sword of the combatants, and followed them with her prayers to the battlefield. Some of her letters addressed to knights and men at arms seem to ring with the very sound of the tourney. Perhaps there are no figures of speech in which she appears more entirely at home than with those of knighthood and battle. "Our King," she says, writing to the Prior of the Knights of St. John, "Our King, like a true knight, remained on the battlefield till all His foes were conquered. With His flesh all torn with scourges, He vanquished our rebellious flesh; by His ignominies, He overcame the pride, and by His wisdom the malice of the devil, and with His unarmed hands, pierced and nailed on the Cross, He has conquered the prince of this world. Our knight mounted on His battle-steed, the wood of the most holy Cross, and for His cuirass He took the flesh of Mary, that clothed in it He might

receive the blows which should satisfy for our iniquities. The helmet on His head is that cruel crown of thorns that pierced to His very brain; His sword is that wounded Side which displays to us the Secret of His Heart, a gleaming sword, indeed, that should pierce our hearts with ardent love; and for His lance, He bears the reed given Him in derision. The gauntlets on His hands, and the spurs on His feet, are the rosy Wounds in the Hands and Feet of that sweet Word. Who armed Him thus? It was Love. What bound and nailed Him to the tree of the Cross? not the nails, nor the stones, nor the earth in which it was planted; they could not have held fast the Incarnate God. It was nothing but the bond of love, love for God's honour and our salvation. Oh, what heart could behold such a knight and such a chieftain, at one and the same time dying, yet a conqueror, and not be ready to overcome all his weakness, and go forth bravely against all his foes! It is impossible. Take then Jesus crucified for your model; dye your tunic[1] in His crimson Blood, and by Him you will triumph over all your enemies."

Nor, when occasion served, did Catherine shrink from reading a lesson to the magistrates of the republic, and telling them some honest truths which, had they proceeded from any other lips, might have sent the speaker to the dungeons of the Palazzo Pubblico. "My Fathers and Brothers in Jesus Christ," she says (writing to the 'Magnificent Lords Defenders of the people'), "I desire to see you true and faithful Christians, full of zeal for holy justice, which should shine like a precious jewel on your hearts; stripped of self-love, so that you may be able to apply yourselves to the general good of the city and not your own private interests. A man who thinks only of his own interests has very little of the fear of God; he does not observe justice, but breaks it in a thousand ways; he allows himself to be corrupted—sometimes for money, sometimes to please those who ask him to do them a service in an unjust way; sometimes also, to avoid the just punishment of his own faults, he will let off those on whom the stroke of justice should fall. And so he shares in the guilt and

[1] The tunic worn by the knights on state occasions was of crimson velvet.

deserves to suffer the same punishment which he has been bribed to spare another. Yet if a poor man were to do the thousandth part as much, he would punish him without mercy.[1]

"A wretch like this who is appointed to govern the city, and yet does not know how to govern himself, cares not to see the poor oppressed; he despises their rights, while he listens readily enough to those who have no rights to plead. But it is no wonder that such men commit injustice when they are cruel even to themselves, wallowing in sensuality like swine in the mire. Proud and senseless, they cannot bear to hear the truth. They tear their neighbours to pieces and wring out of them unjust gains, and commit a thousand other offences which I will not weary you with enumerating. I wonder not that such as these fail in administering holy justice; and therefore it is that God has permitted, and still permits, that we should suffer from chastisements and scourges, the like of which I verily believe have never been seen since the world began."[2]

Truly, there spoke the "Blessed Popolana," the "Daughter of the People," fearless and true, striking her blows home to guilty consciences, and appalling them with her clear, calm words; the advocate of the poor, the lover of justice, the healer of discords, and the champion of truth.

And here we close the first part of Catherine's history, to which for the most part belong those narratives which display her to us exercising her mission of charity within the walls of her native place or its immediate vicinity. Those who have trodden its streets best know how ineffaceable are the footprints which she has left behind her. At every turn they are met by some memory of her who, belonging to a city so rich in Saints, still remains and will ever remain *the* Saint, by excellence, of Siena. They gaze at the grand old church as it stands on the summit of its grassy hill, and behold, it may be, in pious imagination the vision of

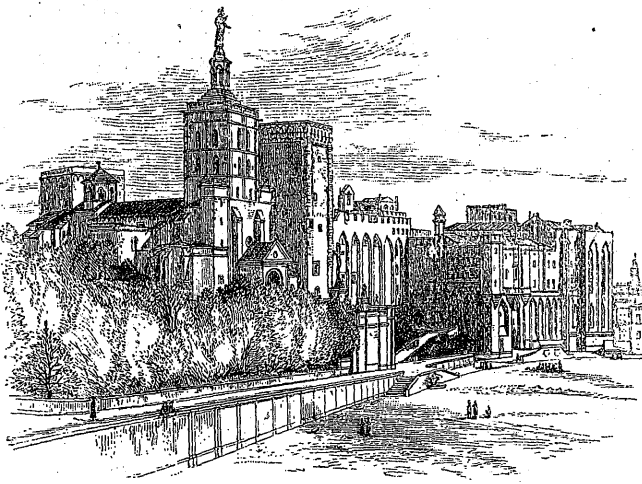
[1] This passage is aptly enough illustrated by the affair of Andrea Salimbeni, narrated in the last chapter. It was not, however, written on that occasion, but some years later.

[2] Letter 204.

beauty which first won the heart of Catherine to her Eternal Spouse. They descend to the fountain by the very path down which so many a time she came to draw water for those homely household duties she loved to discharge, and which, ever blended with tales of vision and rapture, remind us that her life was all the time the life of a sister and a daughter, perfumed through and through with the charities of home. They enter her house, and stand within her chamber; they see the little window and the hard brick steps beneath, where she rested her head. And in that sanctuary they kneel to do homage to the greatest of all the Divine works; the sanctity of which a human heart is capable when the will of God is substituted for the will of the creature: and they contemplate in amazement the close union which He, by His grace, renders possible between Himself and the frail mortal espoused to His Heart, in "the Perfection of Faith and Charity."

Part II

ST. CATHERINE'S EMBASSIES



PAPAL PALACE, AVIGNON

CHAPTER I

The Church and Italy, 1372–1374

IN the year 1305, in the reign and at the solicitation of Philip le Bel, Pope Clement V. transferred the residence of the Popes from Rome to Avignon. Urgent as the causes may have been which prompted this measure, its effects on Italy and the Church at large were most disastrous. The six successors of Clement were all Frenchmen by birth and sympathies; and having purchased from Joanna of Naples the sovereignty of Avignon, they established themselves in the fairest city of France, and drew around them the most splendid and luxurious court in Europe. The cardinals also were all but exclusively French; and from their ranks were drawn the legates sent into Italy to

govern the States of the Church. Their indifference to the populations over whom they ruled, and their undoubted misgovernment and rapacity, brought the Holy See itself into contempt, and sowed the deadly seeds of hatred and rebellion. All good men lamented what in the writings of the times was stigmatised as the second Babylonish Captivity, and minds as widely apart in their sympathies as were those of Francis Petrarch and St. Bridget of Sweden alike sighed for the day of deliverance.

Urban V. was the first to conceive and attempt the execution of a project for returning to Rome. Deaf to the remonstrances of his French courtiers, he left Avignon in the May of 1367, and reached Rome in the following October. His progress was one long triumph. When the rumour of his coming first spread through Italy it awakened high hopes and passionate rejoicing. Queen Joanna of Naples and all the maritime republics sent their galleys to conduct him to the Italian shores; and when he landed at Corneto, St. John Colombini was waiting on the landing-place to receive him, surrounded by his followers, "the poor men of Siena," with rose garlands on their heads and olive branches in their hands. All the way to Viterbo they ran beside his litter, singing praises to God and telling the Pope how glad they were to see him. When he entered Rome, the sad and melancholy streets of the long-deserted city put on its beautiful garments to greet him, and every house appeared garlanded with flowers. All the princes of Italy were there, taking part in the glorious procession. Nicolas of Este, Lord of Ferrara, headed his bodyguard; Ridolfo of Camerino bore aloft the standard of Holy Church; while walking at the Pope's bridle, in the character of Master of the Horse, was Amadeus IV., the brave Count of Savoy. Two thousand bishops, abbots, and ambassadors followed, and conducted Urban to the palace of the Vatican. It was a day of splendid promise, which ended in as bitter a disappointment. During the three years that Urban remained in Rome he did enough to vindicate the wisdom of the step he had taken; but the calamities of a century could not be dissipated in three years, and a nearer view of the unhappy country, as it lay lacerated by

its intestine wars, petty tyrannies, and the ravages of the Free Companies, so disheartened him, that in 1370, overcome by the entreaties of his French cardinals, and desirous, as it is thought, of stopping a renewal of hostilities between France and England, he returned to Avignon, to die.

Some writers, and among others Isidore Ugurgieri, have represented this visit of Pope Urban's to Rome as due to the representations of St. Catherine. But there is actually no ground for such a supposition. In the year 1367 she was only just emerging from her life of retreat, and though she must have heard not a little about the great event from the lips of the Colombini family, and though, doubtless, her own heart responded to the universal joy, yet it is quite certain that at that time she had as yet taken no part in public affairs outside her own city.[1]

The cardinals, on whom devolved the election of Urban's successor, regarded with dismay the possibility of a second departure from Avignon, and thought to secure themselves against such a danger by electing one who, while his virtues rendered him well worthy of their choice, seemed of all men the least likely to undertake a difficult and unpopular enterprise. Peter du Rogier de Beaufort-Turenne, who took the name of Gregory XI., was only thirty-six years of age, of blameless life, and enjoying a reputation, writes the Florentine ambassador, Lucius Coluzzi, "for prudence, modesty, circumspection, faith, goodness, and charity; and what is yet rarer to find in a great prince, for truth in his words and loyalty in his actions."

Despite his gentle and even timid character, Gregory was capable of great purposes, and from the moment of his accession one desire filled his breast. It was to bring about the pacification of Europe by the proclamation of a CRUSADE. The word falls dull and meaningless on the ears of our generation, or associates

[1] Ugurgieri in his *Fasti Senensi* (part 2, lib. viii., p. 143) affirms as a fact, that Urban V., desiring to reform the monastery of Monte Cassino, appointed as abbot Dom Bartholomew of Siena, at the recommendation of St. Catherine. Malevolti, the historian of Siena, likewise says that she wrote to this Pontiff, but if so, none of her letters to him have been preserved.

itself to the notion of a scheme of half-crazed enthusiasm. To regard it in that light, however, is to betray but an imperfect comprehension of history. Neither would it be at all accurate to suppose that the announcement of such a project in the fourteenth century burst on the world and took it by surprise, as the revival of an idea long obsolete. In fact, there was nothing at all new in it; it had been the cherished desire not of this holy soul or of that, but, in turn, of all the Sovereign Pontiffs. So long as the safety of Christendom was threatened on the side of the infidels, that is, for the space of about six centuries, those who successively filled the Apostolic See were ever seeking to raise a bulwark against their further advance westward, and persevered in unavailing efforts to rouse Christian kings and nobles to a sense of their terrific danger. What they desired, and were ever seeking to promote, was to oppose to the onward wave of barbarism the fair front of a united Christendom. The fratricidal wars between France and England were for a long course of years the great obstacle to the realisation of these hopes; and we have but to turn to history to see what were the efforts of the Roman Pontiffs to put a stop to those miserable hostilities.

This project of the Crusade, then, was the first thought which Gregory shared in common with Catherine. Indeed, most writers represent him as first moved to act in this matter by her persuasions; but such a supposition falls very far short of the truth. He was but following the constant tradition of the papacy when he proposed to raise the standard of the holy war, and thereby at one and the same time to check the advance of the infidels, and sheathe the swords which were drenching the fair fields of his native land in torrents of Christian blood. Gregory was every way moved to take a keen interest in the last-named matter. A Frenchman by birth, he was not without a tie to England. He had resided in that country, where he held the office of Archdeacon of Canterbury; he was the intimate friend of William of Wykeham, to whom he seems to have sent the first tidings of his election to the papal chair; and he gladly welcomed English

prelates to his court, and was no stranger to their habits or language. It was but natural that to one of his gentle character the chief ambition which filled his breast should be that he might become a pacificator between two nations both equally dear to him. His first act, therefore, after his election in 1371, was to write letters to the king of England, the court of Flanders, and the doge of Venice, calling on them to come to the defence of Holy Church and turn their arms against the Turks. He bestowed on Raymund Berenger, Grand Master of Rhodes, the rich domain of Smyrna to be an outpost against the enemy; and to unite in one body the Christians of the East and of the West, he had it in his mind to call a congress in which to settle the plan of the Crusade and raise the necessary means for its commencement. But at the very moment when the father of Christendom was thus concerting schemes for the pacification of Europe and the repulse of the common enemy, two of the maritime powers on whom he chiefly relied for the accomplishment of his purpose, took up arms against one another in a miserable quarrel. War broke out between Genoa and Venice; the navy of the former state was despatched against Cyprus, and thus the project of the congress for that time ended in smoke.

Still the crusade itself was not abandoned, and the design of the new Pontiff was well known throughout Europe. It was a thought which had long occupied the mind of Catherine, and she must have rejoiced with exceeding great joy when she understood that the Vicar of Christ was labouring for its accomplishment. Though far from believing that it owed its birth to her suggestion, we deem it almost certain that the projected Crusade formed the matter of their earliest communication, and that her letters of sympathy and encouragement on that subject were the first links of their mutual friendship.

But whatever may have been Catherine's enthusiasm for the holy war, not less urgent was her solicitude for the peace of Italy. How are we to condense in few words the unutterable woes under which that unhappy country was at this period writhing? Yet we must make the attempt, even though it should seem to transform

the page of sober history into the semblance of some monstrous melodrama.

In the middle of the fourteenth century, then, Italy presented the spectacle of every variety of government. Her old republican institutions were falling into decay, and in many states the sovereign power had been seized by some fortunate adventurer who raised himself to the position of its tyrant. Thus, in the north, almost all Lombardy was bent under the sway of the Visconti. Bernabò Visconti, Duke of Milan, a great military genius, an astute politician, and a patron, moreover, of art and men of letters, had spent the greater part of his life in arms against the Church. Wholly indifferent to all religious obligations, he had grown accustomed to excommunication during the Pontificates of Innocent VI. and Urban V., and mocked at the censures of the Church with a profanity worthy of the age of Voltaire. Indeed, he seems to have united in his single person the brutality of the eleventh, the astute cunning of the sixteenth, and the scepticism of the eighteenth centuries. Muratori gives a summary of his game laws that casts those of our Norman tyrants into the shade. No man was allowed to kill or eat a wild animal under pain of death. His five thousand hunting dogs were quartered on the convents, and the monks were expected to keep them well fed and bring them to a monthly review. Those who failed to bring up their dogs in good condition were fined, flogged, or otherwise tortured. At the approach of his huntsmen the miserable peasants quailed in abject fear. None had the courage to rebuke the tyrant save two friars who, valuing their lives as nothing for God's sake, entered his presence and reminded him of death and judgment. Bernabò with a hideous laugh ordered them at once to be burnt alive. He had gradually obtained possession of his large dominions by a long course of cunning and treachery. One example may suffice as showing the origin of his war with Gregory XI., and aptly illustrating the anarchy which everywhere prevailed.

Gonzaga, Duke of Feltrino, governed the city of Reggio as feudatory of the Pope. Este, Marquis of Ferrara, leagued with some

of the inhabitants to deprive him of his sovereignty; and having hired a company of German Free Lances, commanded by the celebrated Condottiere Lando, he loosed these ruffians against the unhappy city, expecting them to resign their conquest into his hands according to the terms of their mutual bargain. Lando soon made himself master of the place, but after frightful slaughter and the desecration of every sanctuary, he found it more to his advantage to listen to proposals made him by Bernabò, to whom he sold the city for 25,000 gold florins. The rights of Feltrino and of the Holy See were naturally as little regarded as the contract with the Marquis, for whom it is impossible to feel much sympathy when he found himself the dupe of a more sagacious scoundrel than himself; and it was by various achievements of a like character that Bernabò contrived to gain possession of other territories of the Church.

After fruitless appeals and embassies, Gregory at last pronounced against him sentence of excommunication. But to a man like Bernabò such a sentence only afforded matter for some grim pleasantry. When Urban V. had adopted a similar measure, Bernabò had met the Legates who were bringing the Bulls of excommunication on the bridge of Lambri, and required them to eat the parchment on which they were written, on pain of being flung into the river. Then he dressed the Pope's ambassadors in white garments, and paraded them through the streets of Milan; and when the Archbishop ventured a remonstrance against such acts, he answered fiercely: "I would have you to know that I am Pope, emperor, and king in my own domains, nor shall God Himself do here what is contrary to my will." When the news reached him of his fresh excommunication by Gregory XI., he dressed up a poor madman in some ridiculous vestments, and commanded him to excommunicate the Pope. In 1372, therefore, Gregory declared war against him: he obtained the support of the Emperor, the queen of Naples, and the king of Hungary; and took into his pay the English leader, Sir John Hawkwood. Bernabò did not feel himself strong enough to oppose an alliance so strong, or so redoubtable a

general: he had recourse, therefore, to his usual weapon of cunning, and despatching ambassadors to Avignon, proceeded to bribe some of Gregory's counsellors, in order to obtain for himself a favourable truce. Meanwhile Cardinal Peter D'Estaing,[1] whom Scipio Ammirato calls "a man of large heart and wise head," was appointed Legate of Bologna. This was in the year 1372, and the letter alluded to in the last chapter, as the first of a positively political character which Catherine is known to have written, is addressed to him by her on hearing of his appointment. But as a French writer has well remarked, this letter shows her to be already in the possession of a political influence, not in its infancy, but fairly established. When the curtain rises to display her *public life* at last begun, we find to our wonder that in reality it must have begun long before. It is impossible to read her letter to Cardinal D'Estaing and for a moment to doubt that they were personally, and even intimately acquainted. Perhaps in a former visit to Italy he had passed through Siena, and visiting the holy maid of the Fullonica had conferred with her on what lay close to both their hearts—the peace of Christendom and the proclamation of a Crusade. It was certainly no stranger whom she addresses with that graceful play upon words impossible to render into English: "Scrivo a voi con desiderio di vedervi *legato* nel legame della carita, siccome siete fatto *Legato* in Italia, secondo che o inteso."[2] Observe, too, on this first page of her correspondence that beloved name of ITALY! and what has she to say to him?

"Son and servant, redeemed in the Blood of Jesus!" she cries, "follow His footsteps promptly and bravely: suffer not yourself to be held back either by suffering or pleasure; but apply yourself to root out the iniquities and miseries caused by the sins

[1] In St. Catherine's Letters, those to D'Estaing bear the title, "To the Cardinal Peter of Ostia." But this has been added by some later hand, and is an anachronism. D'Estaing afterwards became Bishop of Ostia, but he was not so at the time of his appointment as Legate.

[2] "I desire to see you bound with the bonds of charity, as I hear you have been made Legate in Italy." The significance, of course, is in the double meaning of the words *legato* (bound) and *Legato* (Legate).

which outrage the name of God. Hunger and thirst for His honour and the salvation of souls that you may repair so many evils; use the power given you by the Vicar of Christ in the sweet bonds of charity, without which you cannot discharge your duty. Be strong in Christ, then, and zealous, not negligent in what you have to do; and thereby I shall know that you are a true Legate if you have a longing to behold the standard of the holy Cross at last displayed on high!" In a second letter she urges him to restore peace to the distracted country. "If possible, make peace," she says; "is it not miserable to see us with arms in our hands, fighting one against another, whilst every faithful Christian should be ready to do battle only against the infidels! The servants of God are overwhelmed with sorrow when they see nothing on all sides but deadly sin and perishing souls; whilst the devils rejoice, for they have it all their own way. Peace—peace, peace, then, dear Father; urge the Holy Father to think more of the loss of souls than the loss of cities, for souls are dearer than cities to the heart of God."[1]

Meanwhile, strange to say, Bernabò had bethought him of addressing himself to the holy virgin, of whose marvellous powers he had often heard. He believed that if he could only establish relations with her, it would patch up his reputation as a pious Christian, and stand him in good stead with the court of Avignon. He therefore stooped to try and gain the good graces of the "Popolana" of Siena, and in reply to his overtures received a letter which made him comprehend that there could be no fellowship between Christ and Belial. It must have stung his brutal pride to the quick to have been told that "to glory in one's human power is a folly and a madness," and that "no man can properly be called the lord or master of anything here below, because he is only steward of the one real Master." Then she reminded him of the Blood of Redemption, and that he who holds the key of that Blood is the Vicar of Christ. How mad then is he who revolts against Jesus in the person of His Vicar! "Do nothing I charge you, then," she says, "against your Head.

[1] Letter 24.

The devil will persuade you that you may and ought to punish the faults of wicked pastors. Believe him not, and lay not your hands on those who are the Lord's anointed. He reserves that right to Himself, and has confided it to His Vicar. Mix yourself no more up in these affairs, but govern your own cities in peace and justice; punish your subjects when they do amiss, but judge not the ministers of the Precious Blood. You can only receive It from their hands, and if you do not receive It, you are a dead, corrupt member, cut off from the body of the Holy Church!" Then she adds a word of terrible warning. "Think not because Christ appears to see nothing in this life that He will not punish in the next. When our soul departs out of our body we shall then know to our cost that He has indeed seen all." And she concludes by inviting him to repair the past by taking the cross and turning his arms against the infidels. "You must now come to the help of Him whom you have hitherto resisted. The Holy Father is raising the standard of the holy Cross—it is his one wish and desire. Do you be the first to solicit him to carry out his enterprise. Truly it were a shame for Christians to leave the infidels in possession of what is our own by right. Be ready then to give your life and all that you have for the cause of Christ crucified." How great must have been the opinion in which Catherine was held even by such characters as the Visconti, may be guessed by the fact that not only did Bernabò endeavour to make her his friend, but that his wife, Beatrice Scaliger (or La Scala), the proudest, vainest, and most ambitious woman of her time, despatched a trustworthy envoy of her own to the holy virgin, whom possibly she thought to dazzle by so bewildering a condescension. The character of Beatrice, like that of the Visconti themselves, was that of a thorough *parvenue*. Her ridiculous assumption went so far that she insisted on being given the title of *Queen*, though her husband had never assumed the royal dignity. She demanded adulation from everybody, and no doubt expected it from the Saint; and even on her tomb, after death, there blazed the pompous words of courtly flattery, "*Italiæ splendor, Ligurum Regina Beatrix.*" Catherine replied to

her humbly enough, addressing her with the homely title of "Reverend Mother in Christ," and requesting her to become the instrument of reconciling her husband to the Pope. Always happy in her mode of adapting her exhortation, she suggests to the haughty dame some wholesome counsel against the pride of wealth and the love of display, and tells her that she ought to look on herself as the appointed means for leading her husband to a better way of life, and keeping him in the paths of virtue; an idea which was probably the very last to suggest itself to Donna Beatrice as any part of her vocation. There was one other member of the Visconti family with whom Catherine was in correspondence, as is proved by a letter addressed by her to the Saint in 1375. This was Elizabeth, daughter to the Duke of Bavaria, and wife of Bernabò's eldest son. From this letter we learn what we should not otherwise have known, that Catherine contemplated a personal visit to Milan for the purpose of securing the Duke's adherence to the cause of the Crusade. "Your proposed visit here," writes the princess, "has filled us with a joy no tongue can tell, as we hope thereby to receive great consolation." It is needless to say the journey to Milan never took place, having probably been frustrated by the negotiations with Florence in which the Saint soon after became involved.

D'Estaing concluded a truce with Bernabò, a step prompted no less by the entreaties of Catherine than by Gregory's natural mildness of character, and his aversion to bloodshed. "Far be it from me," he replied to Bernabò's ambassador, "that I should be at enmity with any one." In a purely political point of view, however, the truce was a mistake; for had the allies pushed their advantage at that moment against the Visconti, their odious power would probably have been broken; whereas the moderation shown them, however creditable to the clemency which inspired it, met with no other return then renewed treachery. For the moment, however, the restoration of peace facilitated the prosecution of the Crusade, and the powers who had joined the league against Bernabò were naturally those whose support Gregory solicited for his cherished design. To them also

Catherine as naturally addressed herself. She was unavoidably drawn into the current of public affairs by the constant appeals made to her for advice and direction by men in high position. Thus, when in 1372 Gerard du Puy, the abbot of Marmoutier, and a kinsman of the Pope, was named Governor of Perugia and Apostolic Nuncio in Tuscany, his first thought was to write a letter to Catherine and ask her advice as to his future course. We have her reply; and we gather by it that the Nuncio must have written, not in his own name, but rather in that of the Sovereign Pontiff. In this fact we possibly come on the first link of the chain which united the future lives of Gregory and Catherine. She writes as follows:

"I have received your letter, my dear Father, and it gives me great joy that you should deign to think of a creature so vile as I am. I think I understand it; and in reply to the three questions you ask me *on the part of our sweet Christ on earth*, I think before God that he ought above all things to reform two great evils which corrupt the spouse of Christ. The first is the excessive love of relations; that abuse should be entirely and everywhere put a stop to. The second is a weakness which springs from too much indulgence. Alas! the cause of all these corruptions is that no one now reproves! Our Lord holds in aversion three detestable vices above all others—they are impurity, avarice, and pride. And they all reign in the spouse of Christ—at least among her prelates, who seek after nothing but pleasures, honours, and riches. They see the demons of hell carrying off the souls confided to them, and they care nothing at all about it, because they are *wolves*, and traffic with Divine grace. It needs a strong hand to correct them, but over-compassion is real cruelty; only in order to reprove we must blend justice with mercy.

"I hope, by God's goodness, the abuse I first spoke of, the excessive love of relations, is beginning to disappear, thanks to the unwearied prayers of His servants. The spouse of Christ will be persecuted, no doubt, but she will, I trust, preserve her beauty. As to what you say of our sins, may God show you the abundance of His mercy. I, your poor little daughter, will take the penalty

of your sins on myself, and we will burn yours and mine together in the fire of charity. As to the other point, in urging you to labour for Holy Church, I was not so much thinking of temporal things; the care of them is all very well; but what you ought chiefly to work at in concert with the Holy Father is to use every effort to drive out of the sheepfold those wolves—those incarnate demons—who think of nothing but good cheer, magnificent banquets, and superb equipages. What Christ gained on the wood of the Cross they spend in guilty pleasures. I conjure you, should it cost you your life, urge the Holy Father to put a stop to these iniquities. And when the time comes for choosing pastors and cardinals, let not flattery and money and simony have any part in their election, but entreat him as far as possible to regard nothing but the good qualities of the persons proposed, and give no heed whether they are nobles or peasants. Virtue is the only thing which really makes a man noble, or pleasing to God. This is the work I recommend you, my Father: other works no doubt are good, but this is the best. I recommend myself to you a hundred thousand times in Christ Jesus."[1]

We may, I think, safely infer that in 1372, when this very interesting letter was written, Catherine was not yet in direct communication with the Holy Father. Had she been, it would not have been requisite for her to say what she had to say through the intervention of a third party. Equally evident is it that Gerard had been deputed by Gregory to ask her opinion, and the next step would easily follow of a direct communication between Catherine and the Pope. In this light, then, the letter is an important link in the chain of our present history; but it has also a melancholy interest of another kind. It gives us a glimpse of what those disorders were which at various times drew from the Saint such tremendous denunciations. Her language no doubt was strong, and so was that of the prophets when they declared, "Woe to the pastors who devour the sheep," and "destroy the Lord's vineyard;" so, too, was that of the Chief Pastor when He unveiled the abomination of the Scribes and

[1] Letter 41.

Pharisees, and drove out from His sanctuary the miserable money-changers who had converted it into a den of thieves. It was language that could only find a place on the lips of one to whose loving faith the Church was Christ Himself, and the ministers of His sanctuary by their office, earthly angels; for such alone could measure the abyss of misery into which those would fall who should profane so sacred a calling.

In the meanwhile, advantage was taken of the interval of peace to urge on the prosecution of the Crusade, which was publicly proclaimed by the Pope in the beginning of 1373; and whilst Gregory was despatching fervent and eloquent letters to the Emperor, and the kings of Hungary and Bavaria, as well as to the knights of St. John in England, Bohemia, France, Portugal, and Navarre, Catherine, on her part, addressed herself to those personages of importance with whom she had been brought into communication during the course of late events, and among others to Queen Joanna of Naples.

As the name of this unhappy woman will often occur in our subsequent pages, a few words must here be devoted to remind the reader of her character and history Not a few writers have sought to draw a parallel between her story and that of the no less unfortunate Mary Stuart, and the points of supposed resemblance between them are obvious at a glance. Both were Queens-regnant, both thrice engaged in the ties of marriage,[1] both charged with the assassination of one of their husbands, and both themselves the victims of a violent death. For the rest, those to whom the good name of Mary Stuart is wellnigh as dear as their own (and in spite of the freaks of our pseudo-historians such persons still exist) will feel a reluctance to see it so much as occupy the same page with that of Joanna of Naples.

We have no great love for tales of scandal, and no skill in their narration, but one incident in the history of this celebrated woman must be briefly touched on, as throwing light on some future passages in our story. After the death of her first husband,

[1] The above expression is not literally accurate, for Joanna was *four* times married.

Andrew of Hungary, whom she was accused of having caused to be suffocated, Joanna fixed her affections on Prince Charles of Sweden, who visited Naples with his mother, the celebrated St. Bridget. Charles was already married, but the infamous queen did not fear to press him to divorce his wife and accept her hand. St. Bridget, trembling for the soul of her son, recommended him to God, desiring rather to see him die than fall a victim to so detestable a conspiracy. Her prayer was heard, for Charles fell sick and died a holy death, and was thus preserved from the terrific danger. Those who desire to know in what light the character of Queen Joanna was made known to the royal Saint of Sweden may read the awful vision which is described in the Seventh Book of her Revelations.[1]

However, at this precise time the measure of Joanna's iniquities was not full; she had not entirely lost all womanly reputation, and she had shown herself a zealous supporter of the Holy Father in the league against Bernabò. Her adhesion to the Crusade was of paramount importance, as the head of a great maritime state which, by its geographical position, held command of the southern Mediterranean, and was in the direct line to Palestine, half-way between west and east. So Catherine writes to her, and informs her that the Holy Father has sent letters to the Provincials of the Friars Minors and the Friars Preachers, "and to one of our Fathers, a servant of God,"[2] bidding them preach the Crusade, and seek out in all Italy those who should be ready to offer their lives for the faith. She conjures the Queen to join the holy cause of the Church, and prepare the necessary forces; and it would seem that her appeal received a gracious answer, for in her next letter Catherine thanks her for her reply which has filled her with joy, and reminds her in her felicitous style of the glorious title which she bears as Queen of Jerusalem. In fact, the sovereigns of Naples had assumed this title since the year 1272, in consequence of their descent from John of Brienne, one of the last kings of Jerusalem. Very beautiful are the words in which she

[1] St. Bridget, lib. vii. chaps. ii., xi.

[2] *i.e.*, Raymund of Capua.

takes this empty and unmeaning title, and makes it a text to remind her to whom she speaks, that after the sovereignties of this perishable world shall have passed away, there is awaiting us another crown and another kingdom, and the heritage of the eternal Jerusalem. She also wrote to the queen-mother of Hungary, begging her to use her influence with her son King Louis, and get him to take the Cross. "Persuade him to offer himself to the Holy Father," she says, "and to assist him in his project of the Crusade against those wicked infidels the Turks, who, they tell me, are about to undertake fresh conquests. No doubt you have heard how they persecute the faithful, and possess themselves of the dominions of the Church. I have written to the Queen of Naples and many other princes. They have all replied favourably, and have promised help in men and money, and seem impatient to see the Holy Father raise the standard of the holy Cross. I trust in God he will soon do so, and that you will follow their example." In short, at this moment everything seemed to promise success to the enterprise; when on the Tuscan horizon there arose a little cloud. Bernabò Visconti, unable to meet the allies in the field, had adopted a policy worthy of himself. Having by a feigned submission secured for himself excellent terms, he applied himself to work underground, after the fashion of a mole, in order to destroy the power of the Sovereign Pontiff in Tuscany, and foment all existing discontents. It was his cunning and slanderous tongue which first whispered into the ears of the Florentines that the real object of Gregory was to enslave Tuscany, and deprive her cities of their independence. Unhappily, the folly of some of the Legates gave a colour of probability to the suggestion. In a former chapter we spoke of the petty civil war that was being waged between the citizens of Siena and some of her turbulent nobles, particularly Cione Salimbeni. He was causing endless trouble and bloodshed to his distracted country, yet he found support and encouragement from Gerard du Puy, the Legate of Perugia. Bernabò failed not to point to this fact in confirmation of his statement, and quoted it as a fair sample of the future policy to be looked for from the

court of Avignon. Other steps as imprudent and impolitic on the part of the Legates were used with a like skill, and thus were sown seeds of disaffection, which needed but an accident to ripen into open insurrection. It will be seen in a subsequent chapter in what way this was at last brought about, and a storm raised which for ever swept away all hopes of the holy war.

CHAPTER II

Catherine at Pisa, 1375

IT was not until the February of 1375 that Catherine found herself able to comply with the renewed and pressing solicitations of her friends at Pisa that she would repair to that city; nor did she finally yield her consent until moved to do so by the express wish of the Holy Father, who committed into her hands certain important negotiations with the magistrates of the republic. In obedience to his commands, therefore, she set out, accompanied by Raymund of Capua, Master John III., F. Thomas della Fonte, Alexia, Lisa, and her own mother Lapa, who, foreseeing that her daughter's absence from Siena would be of some duration, refused to be left behind.

Her reputation, as we know, had preceded her, and the eagerness to behold the Saint of Siena was so great that the citizens gave her a public reception. In the crowd which on that occasion assembled to welcome her, there appeared, besides the Sisters of Penance, who were very numerous in Pisa, the Archbishop, Francesco Moricotti da Vico, and Peter Gambacorta, the renowned chief of the republic, who brought with him his daughter Thora, then a young maiden of thirteen.

Catherine was received as a guest by Gerard Buonconti, in a house which may still be seen in the street where stands the little Church of St. Christina.[1] Gerard and his brothers, Thomas, Francis, and Vanni, were already well known to the Saint. Their sister, Agnes, now became her disciple, and was afterwards one of the first companions of B. Clara Gambacorta. The three

[1] Baronto in his deposition calls the house "*Juxta Cappellam S. Christinæ.*"

younger brothers had at Catherine's solicitation taken the Cross; Gerard, as a married man, being excused from joining them. The chamber which she occupied in his house is still shown, together with the Madonna before which she was accustomed to pray; nor is it strange that these relics of her residence at Pisa should have been carefully preserved, for her visit was of some duration, and rich in incident.

Almost the first day of her arrival, her host, Gerard Buonconti, brought to her a youth about twenty years of age, on whose behalf he begged her charitable prayers. For eighteen months the poor sufferer had been subject to attacks of fever which had resisted all medical skill and reduced him to a miserable condition. Fixing her eyes on the young man, Catherine at once asked him how long it was since he had been to confession. "Not for some years," was his reply. "Know then," she said, "that God thus afflicts you on account of this neglect; go, therefore, and wash away the sins that infect your soul, for they are the real cause of your bodily infirmity." Then sending for F. Thomas, she committed the youth to his care; and when, having made his confession, he returned to the holy virgin, she gently laid her hand on his shoulder, saying, "Go, my son, in the peace of Jesus Christ, and in His name I bid thee have the fever no more," and from that moment he found himself entirely delivered from his troublesome malady.

One main motive which had determined Catherine on undertaking this journey was the hope that, by her influence, she might keep the cities of Pisa and Lucca faithful to the Sovereign Pontiff. The quarrel between the republic of Florence and the court of Avignon had already begun; and the Florentines were using every effort to draw all the other cities of Tuscany into a great league against the Church. The very first letter which has been preserved from Catherine to Gregory XI. appears to have been written shortly after her arrival at Pisa, and alludes to these affairs and to the difficulty in which the Pisans found themselves placed. "I beg of you," she says, "to send the inhabitants of Lucca and Pisa whatever paternal words God may inspire you to utter. Help

them as much as you can, and encourage them to stand firm and faithful. I am here, using every effort to induce them not to league with the guilty parties who are in revolt against you; but they are in great perplexity, for they receive no encouragement from you, and on the other hand they are threatened by your enemies. However, as yet they have promised nothing. I earnestly beg of you, therefore, to write to Master Peter, kindly and without delay." (Letter 1.)

Master Peter, here named, was, of course, Peter Gambacorta, the Captain of the people, and first *Anziano* (or Ancient) of the republic. He was at that time in the enjoyment of undisputed power; and James Appiano, who eighteen years later betrayed and assassinated him, was then his chosen friend, and filled the office of chancellor. Peter's support and alliance was essential to the success of the contemplated Crusade. Pisa was the great naval republic of the Middle Ages, and though at the time of which we are speaking her power had been considerably broken by her wars with Genoa, yet she was still an important maritime state. With such traditions as adorned her history, it was not to be doubted that she would fling herself with enthusiasm into the holy war whenever it should commence in earnest. Of all the cities of Europe none was more closely linked than she was to the cause of Palestine, and none could boast of prouder achievements in the long struggle waged by Christendom against the infidels. As Catherine passed through the streets and visited the churches, with her heart and her thoughts full of the Holy Land, she would everywhere around her have seen its sacred memorials. That noble Cathedral, the glory of Italy, was a thank-offering for the success of the Pisan fleet, sent in 1063 to assist the Normans in freeing Sicily from the Saracen yoke. Breaking the chain that guarded the harbour of Palermo, the Pisan ships attacked the enemy and won a glorious victory; and returned home with six captured vessels and abundant booty. It was the best age of faith and of chivalry; and with the treasures thus gained the brave citizens resolved to raise a sanctuary to God which should be a worthy tribute of their gratitude. Then

there was the Campo Santo, the beautiful cloisters of which were built to receive the earth brought from Mount Calvary in fifty-three Pisan ships by Archbishop Ubaldo Lanfranchi, in the days of Saladin. These cloisters were being decorated almost at the time of Catherine's visit with the celebrated frescoes which, even in their decay, still impress us with awe and admiration; some of them being the work of her own countryman, Simon Memmi. We are not left merely to conjecture whether she ever paid her devotions in this holy spot, and kissed the soil once watered by the Price of our Redemption: we have sufficient proof of the fact, were any needed, in the letter she afterwards addressed to "James and Bartholomew, hermits in the Campo Santo." (Letter 186.) Nor would she fail to have visited such churches as St. Sisto, erected to commemorate four victories, all gained over the infidels in different years on the feast of that saint; or St. Stephen's, where hung, and still hang, the banners and scimitars taken by the knights of St. Stephen from the Turks. Nay, a yet stranger memorial of that distant Eastern land, bound close to every Christian heart as by the tie of home, might be found in the camels, whose ancestors had been brought thither by crusading heroes, and whose uncouth forms would have met her eye as they passed through the streets, laden with water-skins, or carried their loads of wood in the pine forests outside the city walls.[1]

Naturally, therefore, there was much in the very exterior aspect of Pisa which kept alive in Catherine's mind the thought of the Crusade. And as it happened, she found on her arrival in the city the ambassador of the queen of Cyprus, who was waiting there for a favourable wind in order to pursue his journey to Avignon. Eleanor, queen of Cyprus, was a daughter of the prince of Antioch, and governed the island for her son, Peter II. during his minority. The same island, which in the strange transformation of European policy is now held by England for

[1] Beckford describes the oriental appearance which these animals in his day imparted to the streets of Pisa. About two hundred of them may still be seen at the dairy farm of San Rossore in the suburbs; and are said to be descended from the same lofty ancestry.

the protection of the Turkish Empire, was then regarded as an outpost of Christendom, which Europe was bound to defend against the advancing Turkish hordes. Gregory, who was well aware of the importance of the island, as well as of the dangers by which it was threatened, had placed the queen under the special protection of Raymund Berenger, the grand-master of Rhodes. But as the inroads of the Turks were daily advancing nearer, Eleanor now despatched an embassy to Avignon to implore more efficient aid. The ambassador, whose name has not been preserved, sought an interview with Catherine; and we may well imagine how her heart kindled as she gave ear to the tales he had to tell. They brought in living reality before her the cause for which she would gladly have shed her blood; and listening to his narrative on that heroic soil, where all around her recalled the memory of the holy wars, she felt a renewed desire to see all brave and noble hearts rally to the defence of Christendom, and to do what in her lay to rouse them to embrace so glorious an enterprise. It would be impossible to quote all the letters she wrote during her residence at Pisa with the hope of infusing into the princes and nobles whom she addressed something of her own generous enthusiasm. Nor must it be supposed that she was content with mere pious exhortations on the subject. These letters bear evidence that in some directions her negotiations had obtained very substantial results. "Oh!" she exclaims, writing to F. William Flete, "could I but hear that word which all the servants of God are longing to hear: 'Go forth out of thine own home and thine own land; follow Me, and offer the sacrifice of thy life!' I assure you, my dear Father, when I consider that God is perhaps giving us at this time an opportunity of dying for His Name, I feel as if my soul would depart out of my body. The time seems fast approaching, and everywhere we find men in excellent dispositions; I suppose you know that we despatched Brother Giacomo to the governor of Sardinia with a letter about the Crusade. He sent a very gracious reply, saying he would come in person, and furnish for ten years two galleys, a thousand horsemen, three thousand foot-soldiers, and six hundred

arbaletiers. Genoa also is full of enthusiasm; every one there seems ready to offer his person and his fortune. God will surely draw glory out of all this." (Letter 125.)

But by far the most singular episode connected with St. Catherine's efforts on behalf of the Crusade was the attempt she made to gain the adherence of Sir John Hawkwood and his company of Free Lances. This design, had it been crowned with success, would indeed have been a master-stroke of policy; at one and the same time ridding Italy of a terrible scourge, and securing for the Christian armies the assistance of the most skilful general of the time. It will not be a digression from the subject in hand if we here say a few words on the origin of these Free Companies and the position which they then occupied in society. A great change in the military system of Europe, especially in Italy, was taking place in the middle of the fourteenth century. The feudal custom of rendering personal military service was now often enough exchanged for the payment of sums of money, which were devoted by the sovereign to the hire of mercenary troops. This change brought with it two great evils: the people lost their military habits, and a new class of men were created, most formidable to society. These were the bands of foreign companies, known as Free Lances, or Companies of Adventure, composed of disbanded troops of all nations; indifferent as to the cause for which they fought, their only motive in bearing arms being the hope of plunder and the freedom of a lawless life. Very soon these mercenaries, when discharged from the service of a state or republic, began to gather together under leaders of their own, and to make war on their own account. This system of brigandage first began in 1343, when the republic of Pisa having disbanded a large body of German cavalry which had been employed in the war with Florence, the troops united into a free company under a chief known as "the Duke Guarnieri" (or Warner), and roamed over Italy, levying contributions from the peaceful inhabitants. A little later followed a yet more formidable body under the command of Conrad Landò, to whom the rich cities of Tuscany and the Romagna paid large sums in

order to purchase immunity from their ravages. None of the foreign partisan chiefs or Condottieri, however, were so famous as the Englishman, Sir John Hawkwood, called by Italian writers Agutus.[1] The son of a tailor, he had served in the French wars under Edward III., from whom he received his knighthood; he was a man of true military genius, and Hallam calls him, "the first real general of modern times, the earliest master in the science of Turenne and Wellington." After the peace of Bretigni, a large number of the disbanded troops, who had hitherto found employment in the wars between France and England, gathered under Hawkwood's standard, so that he found himself at the head of a powerful army, with which he was engaged for upwards of thirty years waging war—sometimes in the pay of Bernabò Visconti, the tyrant of Milan, sometimes in that of Florence, sometimes of the Pope, and not seldom living on the contributions or plunder of the states through which he marched. Urban V. took vigorous measures for freeing France from the scourge of the Free Companies, and succeeded to a great extent in driving them out of that country; but in Italy the evil had taken a yet deeper root, chiefly owing to the decay of military spirit among the citizens of the northern republics. They were constantly engaged in petty wars one against another, and being unable to fight their own battles, were obliged to have recourse to these paid brigands. One great object which Gregory XI. had in view for urging the Crusade was, as we have seen, the hope of pacifying Italy by engaging in this enterprise all the restless spirits who filled the ranks of the Free Companies. He had very early addressed himself to Hawkwood for this purpose, and would appear to have received some vague promise, which however did not restrain the English chief from continuing his destructive raids; for in 1374, the very year in which Tuscany was ravaged by that famine which was the immediate occasion of the war between Florence and the Holy Father, Hawkwood's

[1] The Italian variations of Hawkwood's name are worth preserving: Auguto, Aguto, Acuto, Haukennod, Hau Kennode, Hau Kebbode, Haucutus, Aucobedda, and Falcon' del Bosco!

Company appeared to increase the misery of the suffering population. Angelo de Tura di Grasso, the author of the "Annals of Siena," thus speaks: "On the 12th of July, 1374, the Company which had been in Lombardy came into Tuscany to make trouble between the Church and Messer Bernabò. They made a truce for eighteen months, and all the cities of Tuscany bought themselves off, and their captain was *Messer John Acuto.*"

We have now to see how it was that St. Catherine was brought into communication with this redoubtable leader. In one of her letters to Nicholas Soderini, which bears no date, but which appears to have been written during her stay at Pisa, she says to him, "The time is come for us to use our treasure in a sweet merchandise. Do you know what I mean? Nothing else than the sacrifice of our lives for God, by which means we may expiate all our sins. . . . The flower is about to open and shed forth its perfume. I am alluding to the Holy Crusade, about which the Sovereign Pontiff, the Christ on earth, wishes to know our dispositions. If men are ready to give their lives for the recovery of the Holy Land, he will help them with all his power. This is what he says in the Bull which he has sent to our Provincial, to the Minister of the Friars Minors, and to Father Raymund. He recommends them to ascertain the favourable dispositions which may be found in Tuscany and elsewhere, and to let him know the number of those who desire to join the Crusade."

The presence in Tuscany at this very time of the English commander and his well-disciplined Company suggested to St. Catherine the idea of despatching F. Raymund to him with a letter from herself. This letter appears in the old Aldine edition of her epistles, with a heading (omitted in Gigli's edition) which runs as follows: "To Messer John, Condottiere and head of the Company which came in the time of the famine; which letter is one of credentials, certifying that he may put faith in all things said to him by F. Raymund of Capua. Wherefore the said F. Raymund went to the said Messer John and the other captains, to induce them to go over and fight against the infidels, if it should happen that others should go. And before leaving he had

from them and from Messer John a promise on the Sacrament that they would go, and they signed it with their hands and sealed it with their seals." Then follows the letter :—

"Dear and well-beloved brothers in Christ Jesus, I, Catherine, the servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write to you in His Precious Blood, desiring to see you true knights of Christ, willing if need be, to give your lives a thousand times in the service of our sweet Jesus, Who has redeemed us from all our iniquities. Oh, my dear brothers, that you would enter a little into yourselves, and consider the pains and torments that you have endured whilst you were in the pay and service of the devil! My soul desires now to see you quite changed, and enrolled under the Cross of Christ crucified; you and all your comrades forming a Company of Christ, and marching against the infidel dogs who possess the holy places where the Sweet and Eternal Truth lived and died for us. I beg of you, therefore, in His name, that since God and our Holy Father give the orders to march against the infidels, and since you are so fond of fighting and making war, you will fight no more against Christians, for that offends God, but go and fight against their enemies. Is it not a cruel thing that we who are Christians, members of one body, the Holy Church, should attack and slaughter one another? Do so no more, but set out with holy zeal and with quite other thoughts.

"I am astonished that you, who, I am told, had formerly promised to go and die for Christ in the holy wars, now persist in carrying on war here. It is not a good preparation for what God demands of you, by calling you to those holy and venerable places. You ought to be now preparing yourself by the practice of virtue for the moment when you and your companions may give your lives for Christ. Then you would show yourselves to be brave and gallant knights. This letter will be given you by Father Raymund; believe all he tells you, for he is a true and faithful servant of God; and he will advise you nothing that is not for God's honour and the salvation of your own souls. In conclusion, my dear brothers, think of the shortness of time.

Abide in the sweet love of God!—Catherine, the useless servant."

The promise thus extorted from Hawkwood and his comrades was conditional on the Crusade actually taking place; and as it never did take place, the promise of course fell to the ground. Burlamacchi, however, in his notes to this letter bids us remark that Catherine's appeal was not entirely without fruit, for from that time Hawkwood only used his arms in just and regular warfare, entering into the pay first of Gregory, then of the Florentines, and finally into that of Urban VI., for whom we shall hereafter see him doing good service. I fear we must admit that these fluctuations between the service of the Church and the republic were not very honourable to the memory of the English chief; and that, in spite of his promises, he did not altogether abstain from private brigandage. However, Sir John Hawkwood was decidedly the most skilful, and perhaps not the very most rapacious of the Condottieri, "the greatest nor the worst" of the Free Lance captains. The Florentines, whom he served with a certain amount of fidelity during many years, regarded him with esteem and admiration, and on the occasion of his death in 1394, they decreed him a public funeral of extraordinary splendour. He lies buried near the chief entrance of the church of Santa Maria del Fiore, the cathedral of Florence, where may still be seen his equestrian portrait, painted by Paolo Uccello at the command of the magistrates. Another monument to his memory formerly existed in the parish church of Sybil-Headingham, in Essex (the birthplace of this singular man), rebussed with hawks flying through a wood; but it has long since been destroyed.

The great affair of the Crusade did not so entirely engage Catherine's attention as to hinder her charity from being claimed on behalf of many souls who gathered around her, attracted by the fame of her sanctity. In the letter from the Blessed John Dominic to his mother, which has already been quoted, he refers to what he himself witnessed at this time. "In the year 1375," he says, "I heard her at Pisa speak to many sinners, her words being so profound, burning, and full of power, that she at once trans-

formed these vessels of impurity into vessels of purest crystal, as Jesus Christ did to St. Mary Magdalen, as we sing in the hymn of that saint."[1] We should have been glad if this illustrious writer had given us some more exact particulars of these conversions, but like too many of the Saint's biographers he contents himself with referring to facts instead of relating them. His account, however, corroborates that of Raymund, who speaks of the wonderful power which she exerted over those who approached her, and which was exhibited in a very special degree at this time. Many of those who came to see her would kneel down and kiss her hand, at which some took scandal. Among others there was a certain famous physician in Pisa named John Gittalebraccia, who determined on visiting Catherine that he might put her sanctity to the test. He came, therefore, in company with Peter Albizi, a very learned lawyer; and Master John, who was the younger of the two, began as follows: "We have heard, Sister Catherine, a great deal of your virtue and your knowledge of Holy Scripture, and have come to gather some instruction from your lips. I wish to know how you explain the passage where we are told that God *spoke* when He created the world. How could He speak? Has He a mouth or a tongue?" And he went on further in the same strain, putting a great number of similar questions; and then paused, waiting her reply. Catherine, who had listened in modest silence, answered, "I wonder that you who teach others should say that you come to seek instruction from a poor little woman like me, whose ignorance you should rather enlighten. However, as you desire me to speak, I will say what God may inspire. It would be of very little purpose to me to know *how* God, Who is a Spirit and not a body, spoke in creating the world. What *does* matter both to me and to you is to know that Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word of God, took flesh and suffered to redeem us. It is necessary for me to believe in Him, and to meditate on Him, that my heart may be full of His love, Who died for the love of me." She continued for some time to

[1] In vas translata gloriæ
De vase contumeliæ.

speak in this way, and that with so much fervour and unction, that at last Peter Albizi could not restrain his tears, and falling on his knees he begged her pardon for having tried to tempt her. Catherine knelt likewise, and begged him to rise; and then they had a long spiritual conference, which ended by his asking her to stand sponsor to his infant daughter. She promised to do so, and from that time both John and Peter became her zealous champions.

But the unfavourable judgments which were passed on the Saint, in consequence of the exterior signs of respect which were shown by those who resorted to her, induced Raymund to make his own representations on the subject. "Why do you not forbid people who come to you to kiss your hand?" he asked. "The world says you like this sort of homage, and it causes scandal; are you certain that such things never cause in you a movement of vainglory?" Catherine replied with her usual frankness, "As to the first part of your question, my dear Father, I assure you I never observe what they do; I am too much engaged with the interior disposition of their souls, and I certainly do not like it; as to the second, *I marvel how any creature, knowing herself to be a creature, can find it possible to be moved to vainglory.*"[1] Noble words, which deserve to be numbered among the Saint's profoundest utterances.

Yet to one whose humility rested on a less solid basis, the admiration and popularity which Catherine excited at Pisa might truly have been perilous. She could not stir out of her house without gathering a crowd about her. Among other depositions in the process is that of the Cistercian Abbot, Baronto di Ser Dato. He was a novice of sixteen, in the Dominican Convent of Santa Caterina, at the time of Catherine's first visit to Pisa; but afterwards entered the Cistercian Order, and became Abbot of the monastery of St. Thomas at Venice. He deposes to having frequently seen the Saint in ecstasy, both in the church of St. Christina, and likewise in that of St. Catherine. One day when she was crossing the Piazza in front of the latter church, the

[1] Process, Dep. of Caffarini.

crowd of persons of all ranks and conditions who thronged about her was so great, that Baronto, wishing also to see her, and being quite unable to do so, bethought him of climbing the wall of an old tomb hard by, and was about to do so, when Catherine, knowing his purpose in spirit, though she could not so much as see him, nor he her, called out in a loud voice, bidding the by-standers prevent that young religious from climbing the wall, as it was unsafe. This proved to be the fact, and the incident soon became known throughout the city. He also relates that having some habitual indisposition he went to Catherine, and kneeling down, begged her to procure for him the same relief which she had obtained for so many others. But she replied, "My son, this infirmity will be profitable to you, and will be the means of your ultimate salvation; were you to be cured of it you would fall into many sins; you will never, therefore, be quite free from it, but it shall not so gravely incommode you as to hinder you in your religious duties." And her words proved true, for though he consulted many physicians, and took every possible means of restoring his health, he suffered from this malady in a less aggravated form to the end of his days.[1]

We will now pass on to give some account of two of Catherine's Pisan friends who were hereafter like her to find a place in the calendar of the Dominican Order. The first of these was Thora Gambacorta, destined to commence that reform of the order, so long one of the cherished desires of Catherine's heart. She was born in 1362, and while still a child was espoused to Simon di Massa, whom, however, she never saw after her seventh year, for he went to serve in foreign wars, and died without returning to Pisa. During Catherine's stay in the city a great intimacy sprang up between her and the young girl, who two years later was left a widow. As soon as she found herself thus set free from worldly engagements, she resolved to dedicate herself to God. That in this resolve she was advised and encouraged by Catherine is evident from the letters addressed to her by the Saint, in which, after alluding to the cruel opposition

[1] Process, fol. 210.

which Thora had to encounter on the part of her family, she counsels her "to enter the bark of holy obedience; it is the safest way, and makes a soul advance not in her own strength alone, but aided by that of the Order." (Letter 322.) In another beautiful letter she seeks to confirm Thora in her generous resolution, by setting before her the nothingness of the world and the infinite treasures we possess in God. "If our heart be stripped of the world it will be full of God, but if it is empty of God, it will be full of the world. We cannot serve two masters. Let us then free ourselves from the yoke of the tyrannical world and give ourselves generously to God; *all* to God, without division, without reserve, without pretence, for He is our own God, and beholds the most secret folds of our hearts. What folly to wait for a time that may never be ours! We are always deferring and delaying; if God presents one thing to us we take another; we fear more to lose some passing pleasure than to lose God Himself. And so He justly permits that the soul that loves earthly things with irregular affection shall become weary of them and insupportable to itself. Such a soul suffers from what it possesses, through fear of losing it; and it suffers from what it does not possess, desiring to obtain it; and so it is never at peace, because all things that are in the world are less than the soul. God, and God alone, knows, and wills, and can give us more than we know how to desire. In Him alone the soul can find peace, because He is the infinite riches, and wisdom, and beauty, and goodness; and He will fill to overflowing the holy desires of those who strip themselves of the world for His sake." (Letter 323.)

What wonder if such words, from such a teacher, bore fruit in the sanctification of her to whom they were addressed? Thora found courage at the age of fifteen to resist the entreaties, and even the violence of her father and brothers, and flying first to the Franciscan Convent of St. Martino took there the name of Sister Clara. But before her profession she was forcibly seized by her father and imprisoned at home for five months, at the end of which time she was released through the interference of

Alphonsus di Vadaterra, Bishop of Jaen, and formerly confessor to St. Bridget. He was one of the most influential religious of the time, and had a special hold over the heart of Peter Gambacorta, for in former days they had been fellow pilgrims to the Holy Land. His mediation obtained Clara's release, and eventually her father founded the Dominican Convent of the Holy Cross, into which she entered with four companions in the year 1382, establishing there such strict observance, that the new convent became the cradle of reform to the entire Order, in which she is now venerated as the Blessed Clara Gambacorta.

Another beatified saint of the Dominican Order was likewise gained to religion by Catherine during her residence in Pisa. This was the Blessed Mary Mancini. She was the daughter of Bartholomew Munguto, and her baptismal name was Catherine. She had been twice married, and was living as a devout secular at the time of Catherine's coming to Pisa. A strict friendship sprang up between them; and we are told that on Easter Day, the two being together in prayer in the chapel of the Annunziata, attached to the Dominican Church of Santa Caterina, they were in the sight of all the people covered by a beautiful and brilliant cloud, out of which there flew a white dove. Most writers tell us that it was at this time that Catherine persuaded her friend to enter the Third Order of Penance; while others say that Mary did so in consequence of a vision in which the Saint appeared to her after her death. She subsequently entered the convent of the Holy Cross, and governed it as Prioress after the death of Blessed Clara.

Meanwhile Catherine was still suffering from the same infirm state of health which she had pleaded in the previous year as an excuse for not coming to Pisa. At no period of her life, indeed, did her physical strength appear less equal to the demands of her fervid and energetic soul. "During her whole sojourn at Pisa," says Raymund, "her continual ecstasies so enfeebled her body that we thought her at the point of death. I dreaded losing her, and considered what means I could take to revive her strength when thus exhausted. Meat, eggs, and wine she held in abhor-

rence, and yet more, any kind of cordials. At last I bethought me of asking her to let me put a little sugar into the cold water which she drank. But she answered a little quickly, 'Alas, Father, would you utterly quench the little life that is left in my body? for you know that all sweet things are like a deadly poison to me.'"

It was a difficult case; nevertheless, Raymund and their good host, Gerard Buonconti, set themselves to consider what they could find to give her some refreshment. "Then," says Raymund, "I remembered having seen in similar cases the temples and wrists of an invalid bathed in a certain red wine, called the wine of Vernaccia, which caused much relief. I proposed to Gerard that as we could give her nothing which she could take interiorly, we should try and administer this exterior remedy. He replied that he knew of one of the neighbours who had a cask of this kind of wine, and that he would at once send and procure some of it. The person whom he sent for the purpose described the exhaustion from which Catherine suffered, and in Gerard's name begged for a bottle of the wine. The neighbour, whose name I forget, replied, 'My friend, I would gladly give Master Gerard not a bottle only, but the whole cask: but it has been quite empty for the last three months; to make sure, however, come with me and see.' So saying, he led the way to the wine-cellar, and the messenger saw well enough that the cask was empty. Nevertheless, the good man, to make more sure, drew the wooden peg which served for drawing off the wine, when lo! an excellent wine of Vernaccia came forth in great abundance and flowed on the ground. The owner, greatly astonished, replaced the peg, and calling all the inmates of the house, asked who had put new wine into the cask. All declared that there had been no wine in it for the last three months, and that it was impossible for any one to have poured any into it secretly. The news spread through the neighbourhood, and every one regarded it as a miracle. Gerard's messenger, meanwhile, full of joy and wonder, brought back a bottle of the wine, and related to us what had happened; and Catherine's spiritual children rejoiced in the Lord, giving thanks to Him for His miraculous assistance."

A few days later, Catherine, being somewhat restored in strength, went to visit the Apostolic Nuncio who had just arrived in Pisa; but no sooner had she entered the streets than the whole city was in commotion. The artizans left their shops, and hurried out to see her. "Behold," they cried, "the woman who does not drink wine herself, and who has yet miraculously filled a cask with excellent wine!" When Catherine perceived the general excitement, and knew herself to be the cause of it, she was much distressed, and poured out her complaint before God. "O Lord," she exclaimed, "why wilt Thou afflict the heart of Thy poor servant, and render her the sport of the whole world? All Thy servants may live in peace among men, save only me! Who asked this wine of Thy bounty? For many years I have taken no wine, for Thy sake, yet now, behold, on account of this wine I am covered with confusion. I conjure Thee, then, of Thy mercy, cause it to dry up again as quickly as possible, so as to put a stop to all this talk and unseemly excitement." Then in answer to her prayer, our Lord worked another wonder greater than the first. The cask had up to that time been filled with the very best wine, and although out of devotion many of the citizens carried some of it away to their own houses, yet the uantity in no way diminished. But now it suddenly changed into a thick sediment, and what had before been so excellent and delicious became nothing but disgusting dregs, quite unfit to drink. In consequence of this, the master of the house and those who had drank of the wonderful wine were obliged to hold their peace, being ashamed to say any more about it. Catherine's disciples were also much mortified, but she herself was never gayer or better satisfied, and gave thanks to God that He had delivered her from the observation of men, and turned their praise to her own confusion."[1]

But if Catherine had been revived for the moment by the solicitude of her friends, no remedy could really relieve the malady under which she was suffering. She was slowly dying the glorious martyrdom of the saints, burnt up in the sacred fire of Divine

[1] Leg., Part 2, chap. ii.

Love. Moreover, as the time was approaching when she was to be called to labours yet more responsible than any she had ever yet undertaken for the good of Holy Church, it pleased God that according to the law which appeared always to regulate the successive stages of her wonderful life, a Divine seal should be set on this fresh mission, and a new and surpassing grace bestowed on her to whom had already been granted the ring of Espousal, the Crown of Thorns, the exchange of Hearts, and a foretaste of the sufferings of the Passion.

It was a Sunday; the fourth Sunday in Lent, which that year fell on the 1st of April. According to their custom, Catherine and her companions were assembled in the little Church of St. Christina to hear Mass, which was celebrated by F. Raymund. He administered Holy Communion to all the company, after which, as was usual with her, Catherine remained a long time in ecstasy. "The soul that sighed after its Creator," he says, "separated as much as it could from the body. We waited until she had recovered her senses, hoping to receive some spiritual consolation from her; when suddenly we beheld her, who until then had been lying prostrate on the ground, rise a little, then kneel and extend her hands and arms. Her countenance appeared all on fire, and thus she remained for a long time perfectly motionless. Then, as though she had received a deadly wound, we saw her fall suddenly, and a few moments later she came to herself. She immediately sent for me, and said to me in a low tone, 'Father, I have to make known to you that by the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, I now bear His Sacred Stigmas in my body.' I replied that I had guessed as much from what I had observed during her ecstasy, and asked her in what manner it had come to pass. She replied, saying, 'I beheld our Lord fastened to His Cross coming down towards me surrounded by a great and wonderful light. Then my soul was all ravished with the desire to go forth and meet its Creator, so that by the very force of my spirit, as you might see, my body was constrained to rise. Then there came down from the holes of His Blessed Wounds five bloody rays, which were directed towards the same parts of my body,

namely, my hands, feet, and heart. I understood the mystery, and cried out, saying, "Ah, Lord God, I beseech Thee, let no signs of those holy marks appear outwardly to the eyes of men!" And while I was yet speaking, those rays that were before of a sanguine red changed to a marvellous brightness, and so in the form of most pure light they rested upon those five parts of my body.' Then I asked her if no beam of light had reached her right side. She replied, 'No, it fell on the left side and directly above the heart; for the ray of light that came from the right side of our Lord did not strike me obliquely, but directly.' Then I inquired if she felt any sensible pain in those places, on which, sighing deeply, she answered, 'I feel in those five places, but specially in my heart, so great and violent a pain, that unless Almighty God be pleased to work a new miracle, I cannot live.' These words filled me with grief, and I carefully examined whether I could see any tokens of such grievous suffering. So when she had finished what she had to say, we all went out of the church together to return home. On reaching the house she went at once to her chamber, and lying down on her bed soon became quite unconscious. All her disciples collected round about her, weeping bitterly to see her whom they loved so tenderly in this state, and fearing lest they should lose her. For though we had often before seen her in ecstasies which deprived her of the use of her senses, we had never before seen her apparently so near to death. Presently she came to herself, and when at last she was able to speak she repeated to me that if God did not come to her aid, she felt certain she should depart this life. When I heard that, I assembled all her spiritual children, both men and women, and besought them with tears that they would unite in offering their prayers to God that He would spare our Mother and Mistress to us yet a little while, and not leave us orphans before we were confirmed and strengthened in the path of virtue. They all assented, and going to her dissolved in tears, they said, 'O Mother! we know well that your desire is to be with your dear Spouse and Lord, our Saviour Christ. But our earnest petition is that you would take pity on us, your poor children, and not

leave us thus comfortless and without direction. Your reward is safely laid up for you in heaven, and abideth your coming; but we are in danger of perishing a thousand ways in the tempestuous sea of this world. We know also, good Mother, that your dear Spouse loveth you so tenderly that He will deny you nothing that you ask Him. Wherefore, we all beseech you with one voice to make your humble prayer to Him that He will vouchsafe to lend you yet a little time of life among us, for our further instruction in this holy order of life wherein you have begun to train us. We will pray with you also; but what are we, feeble wretches and sinful creatures! We are unworthy to appear before His Divine Majesty, being, as we are, full of iniquity and subject to many imperfections. And therefore we pray you, dear Mother, that our suit may be offered up to Almighty God by you, who, for the tender love you have always shown to us, will solicit it more carefully, and obtain it more certainly.' Many such words we spoke to her, with great heaviness of heart, which we showed more by tears than by words. Then Catherine answered us, saying, 'It is now a long time, as you know, that I resigned my own will to God, so that I have no will of my own, nor do I wish or desire aught whether for myself or others save what is in accordance with His most blessed will. True, indeed, I love you all entirely, and no less true is it that He also loves you far more tenderly than I can do, and thirsts for your salvation more than I or all men are able to conceive, as He has shown by the shedding of His most Precious Blood. His will therefore be done in this and in all things. Therefore I will not cease to pray, but only that His gracious will may be done, as may be for the best.'

"On hearing these words we remained deeply afflicted, but God did not despise our prayers. On the following Sunday, having received Holy Communion, she again fell into an ecstasy, as before; but this time, instead of being left prostrate by it, she seemed on returning to herself to have regained fresh vigour. I told them all that I trusted our prayers and tears had been accepted by God. But to be more certain, I asked her, saying,

'Mother, does the pain in your side, feet, and hands continue as before?' To which she replied, 'I think our Lord has granted your prayers. For not only are these wounds no longer a torture to me, but they seem even to strengthen and fortify my body, so that what before weakened me now gives me comfort; and therefore, I see that Our Lord at your entreaty has given me a longer time of affliction in this life, which I am glad of for the love I bear you.'"

We have little to add to Raymund's circumstantial narrative of this wonderful event. It took place when the Saint was twenty-eight years and six days old. The place where the miraculous favour was granted is marked in the Church of St. Christina by a little column and an inscription.[1] The crucifix[2] before which St. Catherine was kneeling at the time was in 1563 removed from Pisa to Siena, with the consent of Angelo Niccolini, Cardinal Archbishop of Pisa; but so great was the devotion of the inhabitants to everything connected with her memory, that the removal had to be effected by night, and under the escort of an armed force.

[1] This inscription unfortunately contains a chronological inaccuracy which has caused some perplexity to St. Catherine's biographers. It states that she received the stigmas in 1375, *when she was on her way to Avignon.* One or other of these statements is necessarily mistaken. If the date is correct, she was not then on her way to Avignon, whither she did not proceed till the June of 1376: if it was on her journey thither that the event took place, then the date 1376 should be substituted for 1375. But we know for certain that this latter supposition is impossible, for the chief witness and narrator of the event is Raymund of Capua, who did not accompany Catherine on her journey from Florence to Avignon, but preceded her thither some time before. Moreover, all the other witnesses concur in assigning 1375 (*i.e.*, the period of Catherine's first visit to Pisa), as the known date of her reception of the stigmas. P. Gregorio Lombardelli, in his *Disputa a difesa della Sacre Stimate*, misled by the inscription which he too easily accepted as correct, has included among the witnesses present, all those whom he knew to have been her companions on her journey to Avignon, and among others Stephen Maconi, whose acquaintance with the Saint did not commence until after her return from Pisa, and who certainly therefore could not have been present on this occasion.

[2] This crucifix, the work of Giunta Pisano, is now preserved in the chapel of the Fullonica, Siena.

During the lifetime of the Saint the stigmas remained invisible but it was not so after her death. P. Gregorio Lombardelli, in his learned "Defence of the Sacred Stigmas of St. Catherine," has collected the testimonies of several witnesses who actually beheld them. Among others he quotes a letter written to Raymund of Capua by F. Antonio of Siena, who was Prior of the Minerva at the time of Catherine's death, and who solemnly affirms that on the day of her obsequies the stigmas[1] were distinctly seen both by himself and other persons. On the foot preserved at Venice, in the Church of St. John and Paul, the stigma is said to be plainly marked. P. Frigerio of the Oratory, the author of an excellent Life of St. Catherine, writes in 1656, that he had seen the hand, which is kept as a sacred relic in the Convent of SS. Domenico and Sisto at Rome, and declares that on it, also, the stigma is plainly discernible. If by a stigma we are to understand an open wound or scar, this assertion is certainly not correct. Nevertheless, the precious relic does exhibit in the centre of the palm an appearance as though all the substance of the hand under the skin had in that part been pierced, or removed; so that when a lighted candle is placed behind it, a spot of light becomes distinctly visible, shining as it were through the thin integument.[2] Caffarini in his Supplement has an entire treatise on the subject of the stigmas, in which he enumerates the various ways in which they may be, and have been, received at different times and by different persons. He

[1] "The Blessed Anthony, of the illustrious family of the Counts of Elci of Siena, was Prior of the Minerva at Rome when Catherine died there, and kept account of all things which took place at her death and burial: and in a letter written by him to Raymund of Capua, he testifies to having seen with his own eyes her five sacred stigmas, which were manifest after death to whosoever chose to behold them." (*Sommario della disputa a difesa della Sacre Stimate.* Part I, chap. x.) Although no reference to the stigmas is made by Pius II. in his Bull of St. Catherine's Canonisation, yet the fact is affirmed in the Office drawn up for her feast by the pen of the same illustrious Pontiff, in the Vesper Hymn, in which occur the following words: *Vulnerum formam miserata Christi exprimis ipsa.*

[2] In a photograph taken from the hand, and in the possession of the writer, the stigma appears very distinctly.

dwells on the thought that this crowning and stupendous favour was granted to Catherine as a means of more entirely imprinting on her the likeness of the sufferings of Our Lord; those sufferings which she contemplated with such devout affection, and strove to make her own by such generous and lifelong penance. And he adds one fact, which is given by no other writer, but which coming from his pen must be held as of undoubted authenticity, namely, that she who in her younger days was wont to chastise her own flesh with such rigorous severity, was accustomed in later years to receive the same penance from the hands of her companions, in order the more exactly to conform herself to the humiliations of our Divine Lord.[1] The office of the stigmas of St. Catherine was first granted by Pope Benedict XIII. to the whole Order of St. Dominic; and afterwards at the request of the Dukes of Tuscany was extended to every part of their dominions. This feast is now kept on the 3rd of April.

At the time of Catherine's residence at Pisa the little Church of St. Christina, which was the scene of the mysterious event just spoken of, had for its curate a certain Ranieri, commonly known among his fellow-citizens as Ranieri di Sta. Christina. After Catherine left Pisa he decided on entering the Dominican Order, and we have a letter addressed to him by the Saint on hearing the good news of his approaching reception of the habit. In Gigli's edition this letter (120) is addressed: "To Father Ranieri in Christ, *of St. Catherine*, of the Friars Preachers at Pisa." The old Dominican convent at Pisa is dedicated, it must be remembered, to St. Catherine the Martyr. Burlamacchi in a note to this letter observes that in the Aldine edition of 1500, the words stand, not '*of St. Catherine*' but '*of St. Christina;*' but that Farri, who published a later edition of the letters in 1579, substituted the words '*St. Catherine*' instead; and the last

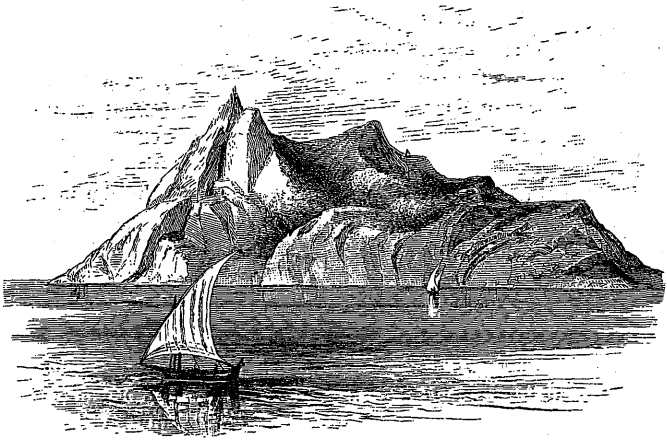
[1] "*Caterina quante volte si fece dar la disciplina dalle compagne, e per tali percosse si vedevano in lei i lividi segni.*" (Sup. Part 2, Trat. 7.) This treatise is not included in F. Tantucci's Italian translation of the Supplement. It is to be found, however, in the original MS. preserved at Siena, and an authentic copy of it is in the possession of the writer.

reading was adopted by Gigli. "Whether of the two readings is correct," he continues, "I cannot guess." His perplexity would have been easily set at rest had he been acquainted with the ancient and very curious "*Chronicle of the Convent of St. Catherine in Pisa*," which has of late years been printed in the Second Part of the 6th Volume of the *Archivio Storico Italiano*. There we find entered the name of "Fra Ranieri *di Sta. Christina*," with the following notice: "Fra Ranieri *called of Sta. Christina*, by reason that when he entered our Order he was parish priest of the Church of St. Christina of Pisa. He had before been chaplain of other churches in our city of Pisa, and received the habit of our holy Order on the Feast of St. Thomas. He was assiduous in the Divine Office, and sang well, with a good voice. He was also a skilful, acceptable, and indefatigable confessor."

It is evident that the Aldine reading is the correct one, and that Farri only blundered in seeking to amend it. And thus we come on the interesting fact that St. Catherine numbered among her disciples, and welcomed into the ranks of her own Order, the parish priest of the little church where during her stay at Pisa she made her daily orisons, and where she received the supreme favour of the stigmas.[1] The Chronicle contains no direct reference to St. Catherine's visit to Pisa; but glancing further over its Catalogue of the brethren, we come on the name of Fra Niccolo Gittalebraccia, "whose family was very great and powerful in the time of the Lord Peter Gambacorta, and who was a great friend of the blessed Clara." And we learn in a note that "of this family was the famous physician, John Gittalebraccia, who lectured at Pisa in 1373 at a salary of 200 gold florins;" and who, I need not say, was identical with our friend John, the companion of Peter Albizi, when he tried to puzzle the Saint with hard questions.

[1] Ranieri was certainly present on the occasion. P. Lombardelli, in his list of the witnesses, gives twice over the name of Ranieri (or Neri) dei Paglieresi, and it would seem that this error arose from the circumstance of a second person of the same name being present.

One other fact may be given to show in what light the reception of the stigmas of St. Catherine was regarded in her own time, and by those immediately surrounding her. Among the disciples whom she gained at Pisa was Giovanni di Spazzaventi di Puccetto, or, as he was more commonly called by his fellow-citizens, Nino Pucci. He was priest and chaplain of the Metropolitan Church, of great repute for holiness, and a large benefactor to the Certosa of Calci. He was also the founder of a pious Confraternity among his penitents and disciples, and chose for its title, "the Stigmas of St. Francis," in memory, as is commonly supposed, of the somewhat analogous favour granted in Pisa to the holy maiden of Siena, whom he regarded and venerated as his spiritual Mother.



THE ISLAND OF GORGONA

CHAPTER III

Calci and Gorgona, 1375

ABOUT six miles to the east of Pisa, in a beautiful spot called the Valle Graziosa, stands the celebrated Certosa of Calci, the splendid buildings of which were raised in the seventeenth century on the site of a more ancient monastery which was founded in St. Catherine's lifetime, and the erection of which remained incomplete at the time of her coming to Pisa from the want of funds. Nino Pucci and the Gambacorta family had helped the monks with liberal alms; but their contributions did not supply the whole sum required. The Prior of Calci at this time was the Blessed John Opezzinghi, who had joined the ranks of Catherine's disciples; and we learn from the MS. memoirs left by Don Bartholomew Serafini of Ravenna (one of the witnesses

of the Process) that the Saint undertook to plead the cause of the Carthusians with the Sovereign Pontiff, and that in consequence of her representations, Gregory gave them 1000 gold florins towards the completion of their monastery. She visited Calci more than once, and made the brethren several fervent exhortations, and her correspondence exhibits the close relations which she kept up with these and other Carthusian disciples, between whom and herself there existed a sympathy the more remarkable from the contrast which existed between their respective states of life. Two inscriptions are to be seen at Calci which affirm that it was owing to St. Catherine's good offices with Gregory XI. that the island of Gorgona was made over to the Carthusians of Calci; if this statement is correct, it would serve to explain the visit which she made to that island at the urgent entreaty of the Prior, Don Bartholomew. The island of Gorgona is about twenty-two miles from the shores of Tuscany, and is not without its poetic and classic associations. It finds a place in the poem of Dante, who, after relating the terrific story of Count Ugolino's starvation, denounces Pisa for the monstrous crime, and calls on the two islands of Capreja and Gorgona to rise from their deep foundations, and dam up the mouth of the Arno, that so every soul in the guilty city might perish by the overflowing waters.[1] Gorgona was a dwelling-place for monks as early as the fourth century, as we learn from some verses of Rutilius Claudius Numantius, which are quoted by Baronius in his Annals. St. Gregory the Great reformed their discipline, but in the fourteenth century their descendants had become so relaxed that Gregory XI. removed them and made over the island to the Carthusians

[1] Inferno, Canto xxxiii. 82. "Cette imagination peut paraître bizarre et forcée si l'on regarde la carte; car l'île de la Gorgone est assez loin de l'embouchure de l'Arno; et j'avais pensé ainsi jusqu'au jour, où étant monté sur la tour de Pise, je fus frappé de l'aspect que de là, me présentait la Gorgone. Elle semblait fermer l'Arno. Je compris alors comment Dante avait pu avoir naturellement cette idée, qui m'avait semblé étrange; et son imagination fut justifiée à mes yeux. Ce fait seul suffirait pour montrer combien un voyage est une bonne explication d'un poëte."—*J. F. Ampère, Voyage Dantesque.*

of Calci. Don Bartholomew Serafini was appointed their first Prior, and through his exertions religious observance was rigorously established, and all inhabitants besides the monks excluded from the island. They remained there until 1425, when the attacks of the Saracen corsairs forced them to return to Calci.

It was certainly a bold proposal on the part of the Prior that Catherine and her companions should come and spend a day with him and his brethren in their island retreat; involving as it did a voyage of twenty-two miles for one as yet wholly unused to the perils of the sea. Indeed, he had to renew his request several times before it was granted, and was obliged at last to secure the powerful support of Father Raymund to back his petition. Catherine's consent was at last obtained, and our readers may think of the little company setting out in the early summer morning, and riding through the great pine woods which extend between Pisa and the seashore, till they reached what we now name Leghorn, then more often called "the Port of Pisa." There, from that shore, she for the first time beheld *the sea!* Perhaps she had before this caught its distant gleam from the hills about Siena, or from the peaks that rise above the Certosa of Calci; but not until now had she stood on its shores or beheld its big waves breaking at her feet. Now for the first time she lifted her eyes to the broad horizon of the purple Mediterranean, and felt its breath on her forehead, while its musical chant was sounding in her ears. She drank in that spectacle of the "*mare magnum et spatiosum,*" which as yet she knew only in the poetry of the Psalter. It left its impress on her memory and in her writings, stamping there two images, the one of trouble and restlessness—a fitting symbol of the inconstant world; the other of peace and immensity, which became to her the most familiar image of God; so that often afterwards she was heard in her hours of prayer and ecstasy murmuring the words, "*O mare piacevole: O mare pacifico!*" And in her Dialogue we see her contemplating Him again and again under that aspect, and likening Him to the tranquil sea.[1]

[1] Dialogo, chaps. liii., liv. She also compares the unruffled surface of a

Gorgona is a lofty and picturesque rock rising precipitously out of the waves, in form not unlike a haystack; the landing is at certain times attended by some danger, but no misadventure befel the little party, who were about twenty in number. "The evening of our arrival," says Raymund, "the Prior lodged Catherine and her companions about a mile from the monastery; and the following morning he conducted all his monks to Catherine and requested her to favour them with some words of edification. Catherine refused at first, excusing herself on the grounds of her incapacity, her ignorance, and her sex; saying that it was meet that she should listen to God's servants rather than speak in their presence. Overcome at last by the earnest prayers of the Prior and of his spiritual sons, she began to speak, and said what the Holy Ghost inspired her in reference to the numerous temptations and illusions which Satan presents to solitaries, and concerning the means of avoiding his wiles and of gaining a complete victory; and all this she did with so much method and distinctness, that I was filled with amazement, as indeed were all her audience. When she had terminated, the Prior turned towards me and said with admiration, 'Dear Brother Raymund, I am the confessor of these religious, and consequently know the defects of each. I assure you, that if this holy woman had heard the confessions of all of them, she could not have spoken in a more just and profitable manner; she neglected none of their wants, and did not utter a useless word. It is evident that she possesses the gift of prophecy, and that she speaks by the Holy Ghost.'"

When they were about to quit the island and return home, Don Bartholomew begged the Saint to leave him her mantle as a remembrance.[1] She complied with his request, saying as she did so, Father Prior, watch well over your flock, for I warn you

calm and crystal sea, which mirrors on its bosom the reflection of the heavens, to Faith, wherein we see and know the beauty and the truth of God (*Ibid.*, clxvii.)

[1] This mantle he afterwards left as a precious relic to the Certosa of Pavia, where he died in 1413.

the enemy is trying to cause some scandal." Then seeing him troubled, she added, "Have no fear, he will not prevail." Some of the monks accompanied their visitors on their return, and when Catherine had landed, they asked her blessing before starting home again. She gave it them, saying, "If any accident should befall you on the way, fear nothing, for God will be with you." As they approached the island a storm arose, the helm broke, and the vessel striking on a dangerous part of the coast filled with water. A monk who came down to their help was carried away by the waves, yet in spite of all this no harm befel any of them, and the vessel itself was uninjured. It was not long, however, before Catherine's warning to the Prior received its accomplishment. "Some days later," says Don Bartholomew in his deposition, "the master of a boat from Pisa, laden with wood for our island, brought to one of the young monks bad news of his mother. He asked leave to return to Pisa in the boat, and when permission was refused, he fell into melancholy and temptation. One day he came to me with a disordered countenance and demanded with great violence that he might be allowed to go to Pisa. I was reluctant to give consent, but seeing his excitement, desired one of the elder monks to follow him. The unhappy youth ran to his cell, and taking thence a knife tried to kill himself. His companion, however, was in time to catch his hand, and calling for help, I went with all speed and endeavoured to calm him by promising that his request should be granted. But he began to say, 'No, no; it is the devil who is tempting me, and he is even now endeavouring to persuade me to throw myself from the top of the convent.' And as all the religious were agitated and terrified, I ordered the cloak that the Saint had given me on quitting the island to be brought, and placing it in the arms of the monk, he immediately recovered. I said, 'My son, recommend yourself to the prayers of Sister Catherine.' He answered, 'She is truly praying for me, otherwise I should certainly have been lost.'" Being at Pisa, after Catherine's departure, Don Bartholomew interrogated a possessed person, "Is that Saint in Siena as holy as persons think?" he

asked. "More holy," answered the possessed. Another religious asked him whether Catherine could deliver him? "*She* could do what *you* could not do," he replied, "because, although you are a good religious, you have not arrived to the same degree of perfection."

Catherine had a special love for the Carthusian Order, and corresponded with the General, Don William Rainaud, as well as with the monks of Pontignano and Belriguardo near Siena, and those of Milan, Rome, and Naples. Her letters to Don John Sabbatini at the Certosa of Belriguardo were written from Pisa, Gerard Buonconti acting as her secretary. There is also a curious letter written to another Don John of the Roman Certosa, to comfort him under his unreasonable affliction at not being permitted by his superiors to visit the Purgatory of St. Patrick.[1] Nor among Catherine's Carthusian disciples and correspondents must we omit the name of Francesco Tebaldi of Gorgona, whom she addresses as "my sweetest, my dearest, and my best beloved brother, whom I love as my own soul," and to whom she sent a copy of her Dialogue.

Catherine's residence in Pisa certainly lasted as long as six months, during which time her attention was directed to every variety of business. A rumour reached her that the Pope was about to raise F. Elias of Toulouse to the dignity of Cardinal; and considering how this event might be made to advance the good of the Order, she at once wrote to Gregory, entreating him to appoint "a good and virtuous Vicar; our Order needs one," she adds, "for its garden has run very wild." She suggests his consulting on the subject with the Archbishop of Otranto, and Master Nicholas da Osimo, two of her own personal friends, to whom

[1] This is a cave or well in an island in the Lake of Dungal in Ireland, where, according to tradition, St. Patrick, finding it impossible to make the people believe in hell, traced a circle with his stick, when an abyss opened, out of which cries and groans were heard to issue. It was further said that the saint obtained a promise from God that those sinners who should spend an entire day in this cave should, on their repentance, be entirely purged from their sins. The spot is still visited in pilgrimage by great numbers of persons.

she writes more openly than she could venture to do in addressing the Pontiff. "I hear," she says, writing to the Archbishop, "that our General is to be made a Cardinal; I conjure you, think of the interests of the Order, and beg the Christ on earth to give us a good Vicar. Perhaps you could suggest Father Stephen della Cumba, who has been Procurator. He is a virtuous and energetic man, and has no fear; and just now our Order needs a physician who will not be timid, but know how to use the knife of holy justice. Up to the present time so much ointment has been applied that the diseased members have become corrupt. I have not named him in writing to the Holy Father, but only begged he would consult with you and Master Nicholas. If F. Raymund can be of any use in this matter, he will be at your command." (Letter 33.) She wrote in the same terms to Nicholas, but the report in question proved fallacious, and Elias remained in office, and lived, unhappily, to take part in the Great Schism.

We also find letters which belong to the same time, and which are addressed by Catherine to Peter, Marquis del Monte, who held the office of Senator of Siena; in which she calls his attention to a number of affairs, and requests that justice may be done on a certain offender who has been persecuting a convent of nuns. Peter held his office from the February to the August of 1375, the precise time of Catherine's stay at Pisa; a fact which shows that she took cognisance of the events which were meanwhile passing at Siena, and relaxed nothing of her vigilance over the interests of her native city. Meanwhile Catherine's prolonged absence was exciting great impatience among her friends at home. She exercised a power over the hearts of her disciples which had in it this great inconvenience, that they found it difficult to make themselves happy without her; and when she left them for any length of time, some of them were foolish enough to think and to say that she did not care for them, or that she cared more for others. Something of this sort reached the Saint's ears when she was at Pisa, and what is more, she had reason to think that no less a person than good Master Matthew had joined in the silly

gossip. So she wrote him a letter (142) in which we seem to see that one cause of the discontent so often expressed arose from a sort of jealousy on the part of those she did *not* take with her, against those whom she chose as her companions. Sad and humbling as it is to think that these petty feelings could exist among the disciples of a saint, we cannot say that it was altogether strange or unnatural; and perhaps it better helps us to realise her life and its difficulties, when we see her dealing with the ordinary infirmities of men and women of precisely the same quality as other sons and daughters of father Adam. In her letter to Matthew, St Catherine says a good deal about sheep and shepherds, and tells him that shepherds must not abandon the sheep who are in real danger to go after those who only fancy themselves so. "Look at the saints," she says, "whether they travelled, or whether they stayed at home, you may be sure there were always plenty of murmurs. Now, do you all be faithful sheep; and do not suppose I am leaving the ninety-nine for one. On the contrary, I can tell you this; for every one of those I am leaving, I have ninety-nine known only to the Divine Goodness; and this is what makes me endure for God's glory the fatigue of the journey, the burden of my infirmities, and the annoyance of scandal and murmurs. If I go, or if I stay, I shall do it to please God, and not man. I have been delayed by sickness, but still more because it is God's will; we shall return as soon as we can. Meanwhile you ought to rejoice to see me go, or stay; so calm yourselves, and believe that all will be ordered by Providence, if I am not an obstacle by my sins." (Letter 142.) In this letter she speaks of sickness as the cause of her delay, but from another, written about the same time to F. Thomas della Fonte, we find that the Archbishop of Pisa had applied to the General of the Order for permission to keep her a little longer.[1] By her words we gather that some kind of a storm had been raging in the home

[1] This fact is worthy of notice, as showing that the Tertiaries were at that time under the government of the Order, and that a strict obedience to her religious superiors was required of Catherine, without whose permission she undertook no journeys.

circle, and that Alphonsus Vadaterra, who was then at Siena, was one of those who had been agitating for her return. "The cross is our best consolation, my dear Father," she says, "let us make our bed upon it. I assure you I rejoice at all you say, and to hear that the world is against me; I feel unworthy of so great a mercy, since what else are they giving me than the vestment which was worn by our Lord? And then it is such a trifle—a trifle so small as to be next to nothing. May the sweet Word give us some good morsels! I fear not to be faithful to obedience, for the Archbishop has asked our General as a favour to let me stay here a few days longer. Beg that venerable Spaniard, therefore, not to oblige us to return without necessity."[1]

But before Catherine returned to Siena, she was doomed to receive the tidings of events which filled her with the deepest affliction, and seemed to put a stop to all present hopes of the proclamation of a Crusade. Allusion has been already made to the intrigues set on foot by Bernabò Visconti, with the view of effecting a breach between the Pope and the Florentines, and to the partial success of his efforts. The famine, which had followed the pestilence of 1374, and spread through every part of Tuscany, had been the immediate occasion of fanning the smouldering embers of resentment into a flame. William Nöellet, Cardinal of St. Angelo and Papal Legate of Bologna, whether actuated by an ill-will to the Florentines, or merely by the desire of protecting the interests of his own dominions, refused to allow corn to be exported from the States of the Church into Florence during the time of scarcity, although earnestly implored to give the starving people this relief. At the same moment when his refusal was causing the utmost suffering and exasperation, other sinister events occurred. The troops of Hawkwood, who had been taken into pay by Gregory, in order to carry on the war with Bernabò, were dismissed after the conclusion of the truce. And foreseeing that the leader of the Free Lances was not likely to leave the country without seeking to indemnify himself for his trouble by some acts of pillage, Nöellet warned the Florentines that should

[1] Letter 106.

Hawkwood enter and ravage the lands of the republic, it would not be in his power to hold him back, he being no longer in the pay of the Church. In fact, the terrible bands appeared as was expected; laid waste the whole country, and even attempted to take possession of Prato, at the very gates of Florence.[1] So far from being pacified by the assurance of the Legate, the enraged republicans saw in the whole transaction only fresh and convincing proof of the Legate's treachery. Mad with rage, the Florentine rulers determined to take Hawkwood into their own pay, and heedless of their Guelph traditions, to declare war against the Sovereign Pontiff. A frightful revolutionary spirit seemed to awake among the citizens; they rose in insurrection, attacked the convents and churches, slaughtered the inquisitors in the public streets, and declared the clergy to be the enemies of the state; while the magistrates, sharing in the popular excitement, passed a decree, in virtue of which the nomination to all benefices, as well as judgment in all ecclesiastical causes, was made over to the civil government.

When the tidings of these events reached Avignon, they deeply afflicted the gentle and fatherly heart of Gregory. He at once gave orders for the export of grain from the Romagna to the suffering districts; but Nöellet refused so much as to read the Papal Brief, and persisted in his former odious prohibition. War seemed inevitable, and both parties began their preparations. Fresh troops were taken into pay by the Pope, while the Florentines, according to their custom, elected a body of Magistrates to whom was entrusted the management of hostilities. All the members of this body were in the present case chosen from the ranks of the most advanced Ghibellines; they were eight in number, and were commonly known as the "Eight of War," but the mob, with horrible pleasantry, conferred on them the title of the "Eight Saints," in mocking allusion to the deeds of blood and sacrilege which marked the beginning of their rule. Another committee was formed to propagate the revolt throughout the

[1] This was the event alluded to in the preface to Catherine's letter to Hawkwood, quoted in the last chapter.

rest of Italy; and for this purpose envoys were despatched to a great number of cities, who, by a singular anticipation of the phraseology and even of the badge of modern revolution, displayed a blood-red flag inscribed with the ominous word "LIBERTY!" "Fling off the yoke of the foreigner," they cried; "the time is come: every man who takes up arms against the Church is the friend and ally of Florence!" These words betrayed the root from which the whole evil had arisen; the Popes, since their residence on the soil of France, had come to be regarded by the natives of the Italian provinces as *foreigners*, and the national jealousy of the Italians had thus been roused against their authority. The flame spread like wildfire: Città di Castello was the first city to join the alliance, and her example was soon followed by Viterbo, Perugia, Narni, Spoleto, Urbino, and Radicofani: in short, before the close of 1375, eighty cities and strong places had joined the league, and taken up arms against their common mother.

These, then, were the tidings which reached Catherine and her companions while they were still at Pisa. When Raymund received the news of the revolt of Perugia he was overwhelmed with grief and horror. "I went at once to Catherine," he says, "in company with F. Pietro of Velletri, penitentiary of St. John Lateran. My heart was drenched in grief, and with tears in my eyes I announced to her the sad event. At first she mingled her sorrow with ours, deploring the loss of souls and the great scandals which afflicted the Church; but after a little, perceiving that we were too much dejected, she said, in order to calm us: 'Be not in haste to shed tears; you will have worse things to excite your lamentations; what you now mourn is mere *milk and honey* to what will follow.' These words, instead of administering comfort, awakened a deeper grief, and I said to her, 'Mother, can we possibly witness greater misfortunes than to behold Christians lose all love and respect for the Church of God; and many, fearless of her censures, even separating from her? the next step will be to deny our Lord Himself!' Then she said to me: 'Now it is the laity who behave thus; but ere long you will find that

the clergy will also render themselves guilty.' And as, in great astonishment, I exclaimed, 'How!—will the clergy also rebel against the Sovereign Pontiff?' she continued, 'When the Holy Father will attempt to reform their morals, the clergy will offer the spectacle of a grievous scandal to the whole Church; they will ravage and divide it as though they were heretics.' These words overwhelmed me with emotion, and I asked, 'What, Mother! will a new heresy arise?' She answered: '*It will not be an actual heresy, but it will divide the Church with all Christendom;* hence arm yourself with patience, for you will be obliged to witness this misfortune.'"[1]

The course of our history will show the fulfilment of this prophecy, which anticipated the origin and course of the schism that was hereafter to break out with a precision truly extraordinary. At this moment, however, the dangers which threatened were of another kind; and the too probable success of the intrigues by which the Florentines were seeking to draw into revolt, not Pisa and Lucca alone but Siena also, made clear to Catherine the new line of duty which lay before her. The power which God had given her over the hearts of men she was now to use to hold them to their allegiance; and at once accepting the burden, she turned her steps homeward, and arrived at Siena some time in the month of August 1375.

[1] Leg., Part 2, ch. x.

CHAPTER IV

Catherine at Lucca, 1375

CATHERINE'S return to Siena was scarcely a return to rest, nor indeed was her stay there of any long duration. The grievous events related at the close of the last chapter were rousing anxiety on the part of all good men; and no one knew where next the spirit of insurrection might be expected to break out. Moreover, there was an additional sorrow in the reflection that all the fault was not on the side of the rebellious people. Though Catherine was ready to shed her life-blood in the cause of the Sovereign Pontiff, and refused no labour that could avail to win back the cities of Italy to their true allegiance, yet she never dissembled the grave fact, that all the disasters which had taken place had had their origin from "bad pastors and bad governors." Hence, when at the close of the year she learnt the nomination of nine new Cardinals, a pang shot through her on hearing that seven out of the nine were Frenchmen and three of them near relations of the Pope. Not that either condition was incompatible with their being worthy of their high dignity; but the moment seemed to demand the promotion of those only who would secure the confidence of Gregory's estranged subjects, and be the certain pledge of a sounder future policy. Hence in writing to the Pope she refers to the event in a few prudent but suggestive words, "It is said here that you have made some new Cardinals. I think God's honour and your own interests require that you should choose men of virtue; otherwise you will incur blame and do harm to the Church, and then we cannot wonder

if God sends us chastisements. I entreat you, do what you have to do courageously, fearing no one but God."

But soon came rumours that the danger was approaching nearer and nearer; the emissaries of the revolution were everywhere busy; and the little republic of Lucca was being sorely pressed—now by the threats, and now by the promises of the cities already in revolt. Catherine had already exerted herself with success in holding back Pisa from joining the league, and she now considered what steps could be taken to preserve Lucca also unshaken in its fidelity. And first she addressed a letter to the Magistrates of that city, the nervous eloquence of which fills us with amazement. "You fancy perhaps," she says, "that the Church has lost her power, that she is weak and ready to succumb, and that she can help neither herself nor her children. Believe it not: trust not to appearances, look within, and you will discover a strength in her before which no enemy can stand. What madness for a member to rise up against his Head! specially when he knows that heaven and earth will pass away sooner than the power and strength of that Head. If you say, 'I know nothing about all that; I see some of these rebellious members prospering and doing very well,' I reply, Wait a little, it will not be so always; for the Holy Ghost has said, 'Except the Lord keep the city, he labours in vain that keeps it.' Their prosperity will not last, but they will perish, body and soul, as dead members. God will not defend them if they turn against His Spouse. Never let yourselves be moved by servile fear; that was what Pilate did, when for fear of losing his power he put Christ to death, and so lost both soul and body.

"I entreat you then, my dear Brothers, all of you children of Holy Church, be firm and constant in what you have begun. Do not let yourselves be persuaded either by demons, or by men who are worse than the demons, whose office they fulfil. Keep faithful to your Head, and to Him Who alone is strong; and have no fellowship with those dead members who have separated themselves from the source of strength. Beware, I say, beware of allying yourselves to them; suffer anything rather than that;

fear to offend God above all things, and then you need fear nothing else.[1] As for me, I thrill with joy in thinking that up to this time you have remained firm in your obedience to the Church. I should be overwhelmed with sorrow if I heard the contrary, and I come on the part of Jesus crucified to tell you that on no account must you abandon what you have begun. If you are tempted to do so under the hope of preserving peace, be very sure you will only plunge into wars more bloody and ruinous than anything you have yet experienced. You know that if a father has many children and only one remains faithful to him, that one will receive the inheritance. But, thank God, you are not alone. There are your neighbours the Pisans, they will not abandon you, they will help and defend you until death against any attacks. Oh, my dear Brothers, what demon can hinder the union of two such members in the bonds of charity!" (Letter 206.)

But she was not content with despatching to them her written words of encouragement. Caffarini tells us she had received an express command from Gregory to repair in person to Lucca; and though only just returned from her former journey, she was ready to defy the murmurs of her own people in order to obey the orders of the Sovereign Pontiff, and to leave no means untried to confirm the wavering allegiance of the Lucchese. She set out, therefore, in the month of September, once more passing through Pisa on her way. A close connection subsisted between these twin republics, and at various times Lucca had been subject to her powerful neighbour, though at that moment she enjoyed her independence, and was governed by her own Gonfalonier and Ancients, chosen from patrician families. The two cities were but ten miles apart, but separated by that high ridge of mountains which, as Dante says, prevents the Pisans from beholding Lucca.[2]

[1] In these words St. Catherine almost anticipates the famous line of Racine, "Je crains Dieu, cher Abner, et n'ai point d'autre crainte."

[2] . . . . . il monte
Per che i Pisan veder Lucca non ponno.
Inf. xxxiii. 36.

Over those beautiful mountains Catherine now travelled, passing on her way through the frontier town of Ripafratta, destined only four years later to give to her Order a saint,[1] foremost in the cause of reform; while all around her bristled castles and towers, many of which may still be seen standing, the memorials of a feudal age long since passed away. On reaching Lucca the warm reception given her by the inhabitants suggested the consoling hope that her mission would not prove ineffectual. She was lodged at first in a house provided for her by F. Gilbert di Narni, near the Church of St. Romano. It is still pointed out in the Via St. Romano. She was afterwards entertained as a guest by a noble citizen named Bartholomew Balbani, who lived in a villa outside the city; and here Catherine was received with open arms by Donna Mellina Balbani, who had assembled a little group of pious ladies at her house, all eager to see and listen to the saintly maiden of Siena. The names of this devout little company are preserved in the letters addressed to them by Catherine after her departure, but we possess no other notices regarding them. F. Thomas Caffarini has left us a vivid account of the enthusiasm which her presence caused among the Lucchese. "She was received," he says,[2] "by the nobles and citizens with every demonstration of honour. As she passed through the streets, all those who had any petition to recommend, and who could find no other means of obtaining an interview, were to be seen running to her and flocking about her. Persons of every age, sex, and condition demanded to see her; and it was no wonder, for her reputation had preceded her, and through all the country round they spoke of her admirable holiness and prudence, and the wonderful graces which God had granted to this young maiden—destined to treat of such important affairs, though she was no more than twenty-eight years of age. Moreover He gave manifest proofs of her sanctity when she was in St. Romano, the church of our Order, where she used to repair for prayer and Holy Communion. She was often seen there after Communion,

[1] Blessed Lawrence of Ripafratta, born 1359, professed 1379.

[2] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 6, § 7.

not only motionless and in ecstasy, but with her body raised from the ground in the ardour of her contemplation, and remaining so for a long time, supported, as it were, by an invisible hand." The Dominican Convent attached to St. Romano was founded in the year 1236. The Church, however, which still exists, is much older, and dates from the eighth century. Modern restorations have left little of the ancient structure, nor does it contain any memorial of St. Catherine, unless we class as such the beautiful picture of her in ecstasy, together with her patron St. Mary Magdalen, by Fra Bartolomeo, formerly to be seen near the entrance door, but now removed to the museum.

In this church, or in that which stood in its site before the barbarians of the seventeenth century began their so-called restorations, wonderful scenes were witnessed. F. Francis of Lucca, a Friar Preacher, whose deposition is in the Process of Venice, declares that he often beheld her at this time, and saw her do many things which caused her to be regarded as a saint. Such multitudes of both sexes resorted to her, that even in the church she was often quite surrounded, in such sort that many who wished to see her could not get at her for the crowd. And he tells a story which is also related by Caffarini, from whose pages we shall quote the narrative.

During her residence in the city Catherine fell sick, and made known to a certain priest her humble desire of receiving Holy Communion, from which alone she hoped to receive any relief. The priest appeared willing to grant her request, but formed the guilty resolution of making this an opportunity for testing the truth of the common report that she could take no food save the Holy Eucharist. He therefore went to the church, and thence set out for Catherine's house, accompanied as usual with a number of the faithful, chanting psalms and bearing lights, whilst he carried in a small pyx an unconsecrated Host, which he determined to give her. Entering the house he approached the bedside of Catherine, but she neither moved nor gave the least sign of religious reverence, though the bystanders, according to custom, prostrated in worship, making acts of faith and adoration. Seeing

Catherine did not join in these, the priest went so far as to reproach her for her indevotion. Then the Saint, justly indignant at beholding the Sacred Mystery thus profaned, kindled with holy zeal, replied, "Are you not ashamed, Father, to bring me a piece of common bread, an unconsecrated Host, and with this ceremony to deceive all the people assembled here, and oblige them to commit an act of idolatry? If they stand excused of impiety, being ignorant of what you have done, I could not be excused, God having made known to me your fraud." Full of confusion the priest retired, troubled as much by her reproof as by the remorse of his own conscience. He sincerely repented of his fault, and always retained a great veneration for her whom, by his own experience, he had certified to possess such supernatural light.[1]

There is another sanctuary in Lucca which Catherine certainly visited, and which contains a sacred treasure, to which she alludes in writing to one of her Lucchese disciples. In a chapel attached to the cathedral is preserved the "Volto Santo di Luca,"[2] an ancient cedar-wood Crucifix, said to have been carved by Nicodemus, the disciple of our Lord. When he came to the face, says the old tradition, he desisted through fear and reverence, and was assisted by an angel who completed it, and thus gave the features that expression of majesty which is recognised by all beholders. It was brought to Lucca from Palestine in the eighth century, and is held in great veneration by the inhabitants who call it the *Santo Volto*, or, quite as often, the *Santa Croce*. It is under the latter term that St. Catherine refers to it, in a letter to be quoted presently. During Catherine's stay at Lucca she visited at their own houses several sick persons who could not come to her, and an incident which occurred in one of these visits of charity is related by Caffarini in the Supplement. "Happening one day," he says, "to hear that a poor woman

[1] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 6, § 7.

[2] In Latin "Vultum de Luca." This explains the customary oath of William Rufus, "Per vultum de Luca," rendered by many English writers as "*By the face of St. Luke.*"

lay in her agony and in imminent danger of losing her soul, she left the house without delay and hastened to find her out, though a torrent of rain was falling at the time. Catherine remained with the dying woman, consoling and assisting her till she breathed her last sigh. The rain meanwhile continued to fall so that in returning home she found the streets running with water, nevertheless she reached the house without being in the least wet."[1] Many other remarkable events happened at Lucca, which are unfortunately alluded to, but not related, by Caffarini. The same observation applies to the testimony of Dino and Leopard, two Lucchese merchants, disciples of Catherine, who are named in the Process as having witnessed marvellous, but unrecorded incidents.[2] No allusion occurs in the Legend to this visit of Catherine's to Lucca—a fact which is sufficient to illustrate how imperfectly the narrative of Raymund gives the real history of her life. He probably did not accompany her thither; and judging from the manner in which Caffarini appears as the chief authority for what relates to this journey, we should judge him on this occasion to have taken Raymund's place. Neri di Landoccio was also one of her companions, a fact which we learn incidentally from a line in one of his poems, one of those half revelations which tantalise us by what they leave untold, rather than satisfy by what they tell.

> "E non di vero gia mai si strucca
> In fin che tu non mi sarai ben certo
> *Di cio che mi promettesti a Luca.*"

What it was that she promised him at Lucca he does not say; but judging from his ordinary temptation to despondency, it seems probable that at this time she encouraged him by some powerful hope of his perseverance.

I will conclude this part of our narrative with a few extracts

[1] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 1, § 5.

[2] Included in the Process are the depositions of two other men of Lucca, F. John of Lucca, Dominican friar, and Thomas Thomasini, a bishop; but they bear no reference to her visit to the city. They are printed by Baluze in the fourth volume of his "Miscellanea."

from her correspondence with her Lucchese friends after her departure from the city. She seems to have spent about three months with her hospitable host, and returned to Siena towards the close of the year. The warm affection which Donna Mellina had conceived for her new friend left her inconsolable when the time came for their separation. It was an embarrassment to which Catherine was constantly exposed; those who were brought into close relations with her found in that wonderful mixture of strength with sweetness, and that unbounded power of sympathy, which sprang from her habit of loving all creatures in God, so great a support and consolation that they knew not how to live without it. Mellina was one of these, and together with her little circle of devout friends conveyed to Catherine a woful expression of the desolation they felt after her departure from among them. It was a great blank which nothing would fill up, and they knew not how to endure it. Catherine was indulgent, and wrote no fewer than five letters of consolation to her sorrowing friends. That to Mellina is of touching beauty, and is worth quoting for the sake of its exquisite lesson on detachment.

"I wish, my dear daughter," she says, "that I could see you transformed in the ardour of charity, so that no creature could separate you from it. You know that in order that two things should be united there must be no obstacle between them that would hinder their perfect union. Think, then, that God would have no other love come between Him and you, whether it be the love of yourself or of any other creature; for God loves us, entirely, generously, gratuitously, without obligation, and without being first loved by us. Man cannot thus love God; he is bound to love Him by duty, being always the object of the benefits and goodness of God. We should love nothing, therefore, whether spiritual or temporal, out of God. You will say, 'How can I obtain such a love as this?' I reply, only by drawing it out of the Fountain of Supreme Truth. There you will find the beauty and the dignity of your soul. In that Fountain the soul drinks deep; seeing and loving nothing in herself, but seeing all things

reflected in the clear Fountain of God's goodness; loving all that she loves for His sake, and nothing apart from Him. When once she beholds how good God is, how can she help loving Him? And it was to this that He invited us when He cried, standing in the temple, 'If any one thirsts, let him come to Me and drink, for I am the Fountain of living water.' Let us then go to the Fountain of God's goodness, whence we can draw out the water of Divine grace; but to follow this path we must lay aside every burden. And therefore I will not have you love me, or any other creature, unless it be in God. I say this, because I see from your letter that you have suffered from my departure; but you must follow the example of our Lord, who did not allow His love for His Mother and His disciples to hinder Him from running to the shameful death of the Cross. He left them, though He loved them; He left them for God's honour and the salvation of His creatures. And the Apostles also separated, because they did not rest in themselves. They renounced their own consolation in order to glorify God and to save souls. No doubt they would gladly have remained with Mary whom they so tenderly loved; and yet they all went away because they did not love themselves, neither did they love their neighbour nor God for themselves; but they loved God for His own sake, and in Him they loved all things.

"And this is how you must love yourselves and creatures. Think only of God's honour and the good of souls. If the separation from those you love causes you sadness, do not let yourselves be cast down. Try not to be any more afflicted about me, for that would really be an obstacle, and prevent your being united with Jesus crucified, and resembling Him. God gave Himself generously to us, and He demands the like generosity from us; therefore renounce all affection which opposes charity. That glorious affection unites, it never divides. It is like the mortar which an architect uses when he builds a wall of many stones; for the stones only form a wall when they are cemented together by mortar: without that they would all fall asunder.

"Perhaps you will remind me of our Lord's words to His

disciples when He said, 'A little while and you shall not see Me, and again, a little while and you shall see Me,' and you will ask me, 'Why say that God will have no ties of the heart, when here He speaks of them?' My dear children, *the bond of charity is not a tie.* If you put in place of it the tie of self-love, that, indeed, will separate us from God, and lead us to nothing. So now, have courage. I feel for your sorrow, but I show you the remedy: give your hearts wholly to God; and if indeed you desire to love me, unworthy as I am, I will tell you where you may always find me. Go to that sweet—that adorable Cross,[1] with the good and tender Magdalen, and there you will be able to satisfy all your desires!' (Letter 348.)

One more quotation, and we must take leave of Lucca, though not without regret and a wistful longing to know more of her relations with the place and its inhabitants who seem so heartily to have appreciated her. This time she is writing, not to senators or noble ladies, but to John Perotti, a poor tanner, and to his wife, who had sent her, as a *souvenir* from their city, one of those "Bambini," or images of the Infant Jesus, for the manufacture of which Lucca is still famous. The good couple had dressed the *Bambino* with their own hands; and in reward for their kind thought and simple piety, Catherine found time to write them a graceful letter of thanks. She reminds them that we should try not only to clothe the little image of the *Bambino*, but ourselves to be clothed with Jesus Christ. "I thank you with all my heart for your present," she says, "and as out of love and charity you have clothed the Child Jesus, I doubt not He will clothe you with the new man, Christ crucified; and in His sweet love I pray that you may ever abide." (Letter 302.)

Of Catherine's political negotiations at Lucca and their result, not a trace is to be found in the pages of her biographers. She barely alludes to the subject in her first letter to Gregory XI., in a passage which has been quoted in a former chapter.[2]

Pisa eventually got entangled so far as to fall under the interdict,

[1] *i.e.*, the Santa Croce of Lucca, spoken of above.

[2] See page 291.

but Lucca remained faithful. Neither city entirely escaped the same kind of trouble as that in which Siena became involved, by holding friendly communications with the Florentines after they had incurred the censures of the Church; but they certainly took no open part in the hostilities carried on by Florence against the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff. Considering the power then exercised in Tuscany by the latter republic, this abstention could not have been persevered in without considerable firmness on the part of the weaker cities; nor can it be doubted that this result was mainly owing to the counsels and influence of Catherine.

CHAPTER V

Stephen Maconi, 1376

AT the moment when Catherine was entering on a period in her life which was to be filled with fresh sufferings and heavy responsibilities, it pleased God to sweeten her path by the gift of a great consolation. He brought into the ranks of her spiritual family a soul who became dearer to her, perhaps, than any of her other disciples, and whose name for the remainder of her life was to be indissolubly connected with her own. Stephen Maconi was the son of Conrad Maconi and his wife Giovanna, a daughter of the house of Bandinelli. They were grandees of Siena, and as noble by character as by birth. We first hear of Stephen as the schoolfellow and close friend of Thomas Caffarini; and their friendship not only lasted through the vicissitudes of school-life, but stood the test of separation. At fourteen Caffarini entered the novitiate of San Domenico, whilst Stephen remained in the world and was bred to arms; yet in spite of the widely different careers which they embraced, nothing dissolved that tie of friendship, "which has remained unchanged," writes Caffarini in the concluding part of his Supplement, "for more than fifty years." Stephen's parents were proud of their son, and not without reason. In addition to a handsome person and bewitching manners, he possessed great natural gifts, and a heart as pure and innocent as that of a child. In this lay the secret of that gaiety and light-heartedness which made him so universally beloved; but it was not long before dark clouds gathered on his horizon. At a banquet at which were present certain members of the Rinaldini and Tolomei families, between whom and the Maconi

there existed a kind of rivalry, a dispute arose on some point of honour. Stephen himself had good sense enough to desire that this unfortunate quarrel should not be suffered to ripen into a feud; but his companions were less reasonable, and urging him to support the honour of his family, they pledged themselves to stand by him to the end. Stephen, therefore, in compliance with the miserable customs of the time, raised a band of followers, and being joined by several of his relatives, they went about the city armed, and prepared for bloodshed. All this took place in the year 1374, when Siena was being ravaged by the plague, a circumstance which produced no sort of impression on the youthful partisans. Efforts were made by mutual friends to bring about a reconciliation, but without success; and so a year or more went by. At last some were found who advised Stephen to apply to Catherine and secure her mediation; for the continuance of the feud with two such powerful families would, it was feared, bring ruin on his house. But Stephen scorned the idea. "To what purpose would it be," he said, "to apply to a woman of no rank or authority; one who has managed to get a reputation for sanctity by sitting in the corners of churches telling her beads? Do you suppose that one like her will be able to succeed where so many illustrious gentlemen have failed?" At this time he had no knowledge of the Saint. "Although a citizen of Siena," he writes, "neither I nor any of my family had any acquaintance with Catherine before the year 1376. At that time I was carried away in the current of a worldly life, and had no thought of becoming known to her; but the Eternal Goodness, Who wills not that any should perish, saved my soul from the abyss by means of this holy virgin." It was through the entreaties of his mother that Stephen's pride at last yielded. She cast herself into his arms, and implored him to make peace at any cost, advising him to place himself in the hands of a certain Peter Bellanti, a friend of the family, and one well acquainted with Catherine, being probably a relative of that Andrea dei Bellanti whose conversion on his deathbed has been related in a former chapter. Stephen consented to be guided by his advice; and Peter, who had him-

self been reconciled to his enemies through Catherine's means, offered to introduce him to the Saint, and accompany him to her house. "We went therefore together," says Stephen, "and she received me, not with the timidity of a young girl, but like a sister who was welcoming a brother returned from a distant journey. Full of astonishment, I listened to the words she addressed to me, exhorting me to confess, and lead a Christian life. I said to myself, 'The finger of God is here.' When I had unfolded to her the object of my visit, 'Go, my son,' she said, 'leave the matter with me; I will do all in my power to obtain for you a good peace.' And thanks to her efforts, we did indeed obtain peace in a manner truly miraculous." What this was he does not say, but the story is related at length in his life. Catherine, who, as we know, had great influence with the Tolomei, succeeded, though not without difficulty, in getting all the hostile parties to agree to meet in the Piazza Tolomei to be reconciled; but when the appointed day came, the Tolomei and Rinaldini kept away, and avoided meeting Catherine for some days after. She perceived their intention of escaping from their engagements. "They will not listen to me," she said; "well, then, whether they will or no, they shall listen to God." So saying, she left her house, and going to the Piazza Tolomei, where she had desired Conrad Maconi and his son Stephen to meet her with the rest of his family, she led them all into the neighbouring church of St. Christoforo, where, prostrating in prayer before the high altar, she was rapt in ecstasy. And suddenly there entered the church the Tolomei and the Rinaldini; they came, neither aware of the other's intentions, brought thither by God; and seeing the holy virgin raised in ecstasy, her face surrounded by light, the spectacle so struck them with compunction, that they laid aside their rancour, and agreed to place themselves entirely in her hands; nor did they all leave the church until a perfect reconciliation and mutual forgiveness had been exchanged between them.[1] This occurrence took place in the beginning of the year 1376.

After this Stephen often visited her on business connected with

[1] Vita Steph. Maconi, lib. i., cap. vi.

the reconciliation, and she asked him to help her by writing some letters from her dictation; for, says Dom Bartholomew, the author of his life, "this holy virgin being engaged in many affairs regarding the salvation of souls, in which, by reason of her sex, she could not always personally appear, was obliged to have recourse to letters, and sometimes dictated to two or three secretaries at one and the same time, and on different subjects." He gladly complied with her request, and whilst writing from her dictation felt a singular change working in his heart, as though called to be a new man. And the change soon became apparent to the whole city, exposing him to no little ridicule. There were plenty of mockers to whom the spectacle of a young man of rank and worldly reputation acting as the secretary of the poor dyer's daughter, was regarded as an excellent joke; and he was followed through the streets by some who spent their jests on his sudden conversion, calling him "*be-Catherined*" (Caterinato), the cant phrase with which the street wits of Siena were wont at that time to greet any who were known as disciples of the Saint.[1]

Stephen soon became thoroughly one of the "spiritual family," and endeared himself to all of them, no less than to her whom they regarded as their mother. Between him and Neri di Landoccio a strict friendship sprang up, which was perhaps all the closer by reason of the marked contrast of their natural characters. Where indeed could two beings have been found more unlike each other, than the gay young cavalier full of life and drollery, who even when writing on the gravest affairs could not restrain his love of banter, and the sensitive poet, the "*grazioso rimatore*," as Gigli calls him, who was ever trembling on the verge of despondency, and needing Catherine's strong and masculine direction to lift him out of himself?

But as is generally the case, each found a charm in the opposite qualities of his friend. Stephen by his raillery often drove away from Neri's soul the black clouds of melancholy; whilst Neri's graver and more thoughtful character was ever on the watch to guard the brilliancy of Stephen from degenerating into levity.

[1] It was the same witticism which had been expended on Fra Lazzarino.

Catherine loved them both; but Stephen was, or was supposed to be, the Benjamin of the "family," and like other Benjamins he had to pay for the privilege, real or supposed, of being his mother's darling, by incurring a certain amount of jealousy on the part of his companions. "She loved me," he says, "with the tenderness of a mother, far more than I deserved, so as to inspire some of her children with a kind of envy; she admitted me into her closest confidence, whilst on my part I studied her words and all her actions with the greatest attention, and sinner as I am, I can say on my conscience, that though for sixty years I have frequented the company of many great servants of God, yet never did I see or listen to any one who had attained such exalted perfection as she. Never did an idle word fall from her mouth; our most frivolous conversations she knew how to turn to our spiritual profit. She could never be satisfied with speaking of God and Divine things, and I believe could she have found any one to listen to her on those subjects, she would never have slept or eaten. If any one spoke in her presence of worldly things, she took refuge in contemplation, and then her body would become wholly insensible. Her ecstasies were continual, and we witnessed them a thousand times. Her body might then be seen raised in the air, contrary to the laws of gravity, as I myself can personally testify. Her whole life was a miracle, but there was one circumstance about it truly admirable. Nothing that she did, said, or heard, hindered her soul from being intimately united to God, and plunged as it were into the Divinity. She never spoke save of God or what referred to Him; she sought Him and she found Him in all things, and that by an actual and sensible love. Temptations and troubles vanished in her presence. Criminals condemned to death often sent for her; and when she had once visited them, they seemed no longer to think of the terrible destiny awaiting them. I myself remember often going to her in some interior trouble, and afterwards acknowledging to her that I had quite forgotten what it was. I would ask her to tell me, and she would do so, and explain it far better than I could have done myself. Nor is this surprising, for it is well known that she saw

souls as we see faces; we could hide nothing from her. By her holy words she brought back an immense multitude of persons to the path of virtue, and led them to confess their sins; in fact, it was impossible to resist her.

"Sometimes sinners presented themselves who were so chained by their sins, that they would say to her, 'Madam, were you to ask us to go to Rome or to Compostella, we would do it directly; but as to our going to confession, do not mention it, it is impossible.' When she had exhausted every other method, she would say to them: 'If I tell you why you refuse to go to confession, would you then go?' They would accept this condition, and she would then say to them: 'My dear brother, we may sometimes escape the eyes of men, but never those of God. You committed such a sin, in such a place, and at such a time, and that is the reason that Satan troubles your soul and hinders you from confessing.' The sinner finding himself discovered would prostrate himself at her feet, acknowledging his fault, and with a profusion of tears confess without delay. This I can certify as having occurred to many. One among others who held a high position and enjoyed a great reputation throughout all Italy, told me: 'God and myself alone know what that holy woman revealed to me, I cannot therefore doubt that she is much greater before God than we can even think.'"

Stephen had personal experience of the Saint's wonderful powers in this respect. In the early period of their acquaintance he allowed himself to be drawn into some plots against the government, and attended the secret meetings of the conspirators, held in the vaults of La Scala. Catherine, who knew by revelation what was going on, sent for Stephen, and, severely reproving him, bade him take a discipline, and shed as many drops of his own blood as he had spoken words in the unlawful assembly. She also foretold that these holy subterranean vaults would one day be closed in consequence of the bad use made of them by seditious persons; a prediction which was verified in 1390. (Vit. Steph. Mac., lib. v. c. 2.)

Such is the testimony which Catherine's favourite disciple has

borne regarding "the holy memory," as he calls it, looking back on it through the long vista of thirty years. No wonder that the affection and confidence given him by such a soul weaned him from every other human tie, and that his intercourse with her seemed to satisfy every wish and desire of his heart. "The longer I was with her," he says, "the more I felt the love of God and a contempt of the world springing up and growing within me. Soon after our acquaintance had first begun, Catherine one day said to me, 'You will see, my dear son, that ere long your greatest earthly wish will be accomplished.' These words surprised me much; I did not know what I could desire in *the world*, I was thinking rather of quitting it entirely. I said to her: 'My very dear Mother, what is that greatest desire?' She replied, 'Look into your heart.' I said, 'Beloved Mother, I do not find any greater desire than that of always remaining near you.' She answered instantly, 'And it will be satisfied.' And, in fact, shortly after this conversation, events occurred which once more summoned Catherine away from Siena."[1] And in these fresh journeys Stephen was chosen to be one of those who should bear her company. "I left my father, my mother, my brothers and sisters, and all my kindred with joy," he says, "so happy was I to remain in Catherine's presence, and to be admitted to her holy friendship." And it is of these new and important expeditions that we now have to speak.

[1] In his letter to Caffarini, from which the above extracts have been taken, Stephen says that he soon afterwards accompanied Catherine to *Avignon*, omitting all mention of their previous visit to Florence. Caffarini, however, with his usual accuracy, says in his Supplement, that Stephen went with her, "from Siena to Florence, and from Florence to Avignon, and thence to Genoa; after which he again returned with her to Florence."

CHAPTER VI

Catherine's First Embassy to Florence, 1376

IN the part which Catherine had hitherto taken in the affairs of Tuscany she had found means of combining an uncompromising zeal for loyalty with an earnest advocacy of indulgent measures towards the revolted cities and provinces. There were two objects which she sought to gain by her efforts and by her prayers: on the part of the rebels, an unconditional submission; on that of the Pontiff and his advisers, a policy of peace and reconciliation. Hence, while in her correspondence with her friends at Florence, she exerted herself to convince them that members of the Church when separated from its head must inevitably become dead and corrupt, and that no amount of wrongs endured can justify children in revolting against their Father, her letters to Avignon as constantly pleaded for pardon for the past and good government for the future. She uses every argument in her power to induce Gregory to adopt measures of pacification. She admits the just complaints which he might allege against the rebellious Florentines, but urges on him the magnanimous policy of forgiveness, as best befitting the Vicar of Him Who laid down His life for His sheep. What hope for the reform of scandals and abuses, what hope for the prosecution of the Crusade, if the Church were to plunge into war with her own children? Better far to admit their real grievances, and to appoint good and just governors; this is the summary of all her arguments, and still she reiterates the cry, "Peace, for the love of Jesus crucified, no more war, my sweet Father, but peace! peace!" Gregory, who had already taken a considerable body

of troops into his pay, listened to St. Catherine's appeal, and in the beginning of 1376 despatched ambassadors to Florence, offering very moderate terms. If the Florentines would renounce their warlike programme and engage not to stir up Bologna to rebellion, the Pope would grant freedom to Perugia and Città di Castello. But such a proposal was by no means acceptable to the "Eight of war," whose power and consequence were entirely bound up with the prosecution of hostilities. Whilst, therefore, the Pope's envoys were actually negotiating these terms of peace with the citizens, the "Eight of war" secretly despatched their own envoys to Bologna, with instructions to rouse the populace to revolt; and the Legate of that city had to seek safety in flight.

This odious piece of treachery was naturally resented by Gregory, who saw himself mocked and betrayed at the very moment when he was condescending to the Florentines and soliciting peace. Catherine, however, did not yet despair, and whilst she continued to implore the Pope still to show clemency to the infatuated people, she addressed herself to one of the Florentine Magistrates whom she knew and trusted as an honest citizen, and faithful son of the Holy Church. This was Nicolas Soderini, who had been Gonfalonier of Justice in 1371, and at this time was one of the "Priors of Arts" in Florence, and a chief Magistrate of the republic. Catherine addresses him in just such plain common-sense terms as suited his straightforward character. "Can there be a greater misfortune than to lose God? We may form a powerful league, and be allied with many cities and great personages; but what good will that do us if we are not united with God? What blindness! It is God Who preserves all the cities in the world, and I revolt against Him! Perhaps you say, 'I do *not* revolt against God;' but I say, what you do against His Vicar you do against Him. Since the Vicar of Christ has such power that he can open or shut the gates of life eternal, what are we but dead members if we revolt against him? Without him we can do nothing. If you are against the Holy Church, how can you share in the Blood of Christ? For the

Church is none other than Christ Himself.[1] Perhaps it seems to you that it is you who have received the injury, but how can those judge others who have themselves fallen into the same fault? I beg of you, Nicolas, do your utmost to be just. It is not for nothing that God has put it in your power to make peace; it is to save you and all Tuscany. War does not seem to me to be such a sweet thing that we need seek for it when it is in our power to avoid it. Try and discharge the office of the Angels who are ever seeking to make peace between us and God. Do your utmost, whether it pleases or displeases men; think only of God's honour and your own salvation, and even if it cost you your life, never hesitate to speak the truth, fearing neither men nor devils." (Letter 217.)

Meanwhile things seemed approaching a crisis; on the one hand the mad Ghibelline mob, encouraged by their "Eight Saints," after slaughtering the inquisitors, seized the Papal Nuncio and flayed him alive in the streets of Florence with circumstances of unspeakable atrocity. The Pope replied to these enormities by placing the city under an interdict, and excommunicating the authors of the crime. The censures of the Church in those days were no mere nominal punishment, nor were their consequences exclusively spiritual. In the present case the sentence pronounced against the Florentines broke up their commercial prosperity, and thus touched them on their tenderest point. To preserve their important mercantile relations with England, they despatched envoys to that country, declaring themselves entirely innocent of the crime of rebellion against the Pope, and requesting that their merchants might take refuge in the king's dominions, "till a more serene air of papal grace should smile upon them." Richard II. received them kindly, and showed himself disposed to grant their request, when letters were received from the Pope explaining the facts of the case; declaring the Florentines excommunicated for their crimes, and specially for the horrible murder of the Nuncio, and requiring that the Bulls to that effect should be published in the metropolis by the Bishop of London. A

[1] *La chiesa non è altro che esso Christo.*

singular alternative, however, was offered by these Bulls to the Florentines residing in England. If they were willing to become bondsmen, with all their goods and chattels, it would be lawful for the English who so received them to communicate and treat with them, and for the Florentines who consented to such an alternative to remain and dwell in the land. In short, strange as the condition appears, it was, and was intended to be, a way of escape from the extreme penalty, as it enabled the Florentine merchants to hold on until better times; and they unanimously agreed to accept the proposed condition.[1]

The injury inflicted on their commerce induced the Florentines to pause in their headlong career, and despatch envoys to Avignon to treat for peace. The envoys were accompanied by Donato Barbadori, a popular orator, who set forth the grievances of his fellow-citizens and the misdeeds of the Legates in a strain of impassioned eloquence, but without one word in acknowledgment of the treasons and atrocious acts of violence with which these grievances had been met. After some days' consideration, during which the Italian Cardinals pleaded for gentle measures, and the French for war, the final answer was given: the counsels of the French prevailed; the interdict was to remain in force, and war was declared.

When this news reached Florence, it raised a furious storm. The revolutionary party proposed to break with the Church altogether and establish a new religion; and, on the other hand, Count Robert of Geneva, appointed commander of the Papal forces, was leading into Italy an army of 10,000 Breton Free Lances. The danger was imminent, and in their extreme alarm the Florentines turned their thoughts towards Catherine, and the less insane members of the republic, with Soderini at their head, implored her to come to Florence and assist them in fresh

[1] See Thomson's "Chronicon Angliæ," by a monk of St. Albans, pp. 101–2, 109–11. These facts explain the statement of Scipio Ammirato, who says that the English made slaves of the Florentines residing in England. Tronci, the Chronicler of Pisa, says that it was because the Pisans did not dare to expel the Florentine merchants from their territory, that they fell under the interdict.

negotiations with the Pope; "for," says St. Antoninus, "they knew her to be most acceptable to his Holiness." She set out, therefore, in the month of May 1376, just two years after her first visit. Many of the citizens had seen her on that occasion, and formed their own opinion of her sanctity. Others knew her by report alone, and the events of her six months' residence at Pisa in the previous year could not fail to have reached the ears of many. It is thus that Scipio Ammirato, the Florentine historian, and one by no means to be reckoned among Catherine's adherents, speaks of the feeling of his countrymen regarding her. "The Florentines knew for certain that she had remained many days without any other food than the Blessed Sacrament, though that was impossible in the natural order; they were aware that she had passed most of her life in the most absolute solitude; they were convinced that it was by the particular design of God that she had exchanged the contemplative for the active life; and hearing that with no knowledge of Latin she yet explained the most difficult passages of Holy Scripture, and that she had learned to read by no human means, all her words and actions came to be regarded as divinely inspired. Hence she was continually implored to reconcile enmities, to deliver the possessed, to console the afflicted, and to come to their help; all which she did with so much zeal and humility, that though some were not wanting who blamed her with little kindness, she was generally regarded, as well by men as women, as a true servant of God, and very dear to His heart."[1]

This passage is a valuable testimony from a purely secular writer, and shows in a clear manner how it was that Catherine was drawn out of her solitude and compelled to take part in public affairs, through the increasing fame of her sanctity, and its power over a believing people. She therefore prepared to depart. She had already sent Neri di Landoccio to Avignon, bearing a letter to the Pope, and had urged him to support its arguments with all his might. "Labour in the cause of charity," she writes to him, "and so you will be doing the will of God and

[1] Scipio Am., liv. xiii. p. 711.

that of your poor mother, whose heart is just now very sad." Some time in March she had likewise sent F. Raymund of Capua and Master John III. to Avignon to prepare the way for a pacification.[1] We learn this from Raymund's own words in the Legend (Part III. chap. vi.) and from a letter written to him by the Saint, in which she speaks of certain revelations made to her "on the first day of April." She was then preparing for her own part in the mission of peace. On that first day of April God revealed to her admirable things, and explained to her "the mystery of the persecution which the Church was then suffering." He made her comprehend how it was that these scandals which obscured the Church's splendour were permitted. "I allow this time of persecution," He said, "in order to tear up the thorns with which My Spouse is surrounded; but I do not consent to the guilty acts of men. I do as I did when I was on earth: I make a scourge of cords to drive out those who buy and sell in My Temple, and with it I chastise those impure, avaricious merchants who traffic with the gifts of the Holy Ghost.' Then Catherine beheld herself surrounded by many saints, among whom were St. Dominic and St. John the Evangelist, together with many of her children; whilst our Lord placed His Cross on her shoulder and an olive branch in her hand, and commanded her to bear it *all' uno popolo, ed all' altro;* that is, to both the hostile parties. "I am dying of desire and expectation," she concludes; "have pity on me, and beg the Christ on earth not to delay." (Letter 87.)

This, then, was her preparation for her first public mission, the Cross laid on her shoulder, the olive branch placed in her hand! This interesting passage does not appear to have been quoted by

[1] Capecelatro supposes Raymund to have accompanied Catherine to Florence, and to have been sent thence by her. But these are Raymund's own words: "The Florentines decided that I should *first* go to the Holy Father on the part of Catherine; and *then* they summoned her to Florence." She did not go to Florence until the beginning of May; and writes to Raymund in the early days of April, her letter being addressed to Avignon. St. Antoninus says she was at Pisa when she was summoned to Florence, but this is allowed to be a mistake.

any of the Saint's historians; but no more exquisite introduction to her political life can surely be imagined.

She proceeded then to Florence, accompanied by some of her ordinary companions and disciples, and among others by Stephen Maconi: and, as Raymund tells us, was met by all the principal men of the city with every mark of respect. In Francesco Vanni's illustrations of her life, he represents them riding forth in state to receive her, as she and her companions appear coming over the hills, clad in the garb of pilgrims. All the magistrates were not strangers to her. With Buonacorso di Lapo and Charles Strozzi she had probably made acquaintance the previous year, when they came to Siena as arbiters to settle the difference between the Sienese government and the nobles. Nicolas Soderini was also an old and long-tried friend, and he now gladly received her and all her company into his house,[1] furnishing them with all necessaries, and exerting himself to introduce the Saint to those who might be likely to forward the business on which she came.

Immense difficulties stood in the way of any peaceful accommodation. The government of Florence was carried on by a number of separate committees of magistrates, a minute account of which will be found given in Capecelatro's history. It was a system which seemed to have been devised with the express view of promoting factions and misunderstandings; at any rate it offered singular facilities for the purpose. Moreover, like all the Italian republics, Florence was torn by the contending parties of Guelph and Ghibelline, and by the feuds of rival families. The Ricci fomented the war, because they aimed at placing themselves on a level with the great Guelph family of the Albizi; and for that reason set themselves to oppose the efforts of the Saint to promote peace by all the means in their power. That in spite

1. "Pursuing the quay along the river, the present Casa Molini and the houses on the other side of the Piazza beyond belonged to the Soderini family, who from the earliest times exercised great influence in the republic. It was here that Nicolas Soderini received St. Catherine of Siena."—(Homer's "Walks in Florence," vol. ii. p. 284.)

of every difficulty Catherine should have succeeded in gaining a hearing, and in softening the hearts of men inflamed with revolutionary passions, speaks volumes of itself. In a short time she was able to despatch a letter to Gregory, in which she assures him of the pacific disposition of the Florentines, while at the same time she ceases not to press upon him the necessity of three important measures—the conclusion of peace, the return to Rome, and the proclamation of the Crusade.[1] "Do not be discouraged," she says, "by the scandals and revolts of which you hear, give no ear to the devil, who sees the loss which threatens him, and who would do all in his power to dissuade you from returning to Rome. My Father, I say to you in the name of Christ, come, and come quickly. Remember you hold the place of the sweet Lamb of God, whose unarmed hand slew all our enemies. He made use of no other weapons than those of love. He thought only of spiritual things, and how to give back to men the life of grace. My dearest Father, with that same sweet Hand of His, I conjure you, come, and conquer all our enemies in the name of Christ crucified; do not listen to those who would hinder you: be generous and fearless. Respond to the call of God, Who bids you return to the city of St. Peter, our glorious Head, whose successor you are; come, and live there, and then raise the standard of the Holy Cross. This will deliver us from our wars, and divisions, and iniquities, and will at the same time convert the infidels from their errors. Then you will give good pastors to the Church, and restore her strength; for those who have hitherto devoured her have drained her of her life-blood, so that her face is become quite pale. Do not stay away because of what has happened at Bologna. I assure you the savage wolves are ready to lay their heads on your bosom like so many gentle lambs, and to ask mercy of you, as of their father. I conjure you, then, listen favourably to what F. Raymund and my other sons will say to you; they come to you on the part of Jesus crucified, and are faithful children of Holy Church."

This letter explains St. Catherine's entire policy. Peace at

[1] Letter 5.

any cost, and the prevention of that worst of all scandals—the war between a father and his children; the return of the Pope to his own States, that he might govern them with justice and clemency in his own name, and deliver them from the rapacity and cruelty of his lieutenants; and, lastly, the Crusade,—to heal society, wounded to the heart with faction and civil discord, and unite all in a common cause, namely, the protection of Christendom from the approaching hordes of the Turks. Her views were not the views of a visionary enthusiast, but eminently practical, had there been in any of the public men of the time the heart that could have responded to such a call. She loved her country, and, like a true Italian, held in horror the bands of mercenary foreigners ready to be let loose on the fair fields of Tuscany; and so in her next letter she failed not to remind the Pope that if he came, it would be to little purpose if he brought with him his foreign soldiers. "Keep the troops you have taken into pay," she says, "but do not let them come into Italy; for, instead of settling our difficulties, they will spoil all. Come like a brave and fearless man, but, for the love of God, come with the Cross in your hand, not with a great military escort." Unhappily, even as she was writing the words, the Breton troops were already on their march. Robert of Genoa left Avignon on the 27th of May, and his soldiers, entering the Bolognese territory, at once commenced a course of pillage and devastation, which furnished triumphant arguments to those who desired nothing better than an irreconcilable breach.

Catherine's stay at Florence during this second visit could hardly have exceeded a month or six weeks, for she came thither in the early part of May, and entered Avignon on the 18th of June. During this time, short as it was, she was able to make many friends. Of Nicolas Soderini I have already spoken; to his name must be added those of Peter Canigiani, and his two sons, Ristoro and Barduccio; of Don John of the Cells, the hermit of Vallombrosa, whose acquaintance she had already made at Pisa, and who had given her his hearty support in her negotiations for the Crusade; of Bartolo Usimbardi, an illus-

trious noble, and his wife Monna Orsa, to whom she sent several letters which, oddly enough, are addressed to them in common with Francesco Pepin, the *tailor*, and his wife Agnes. She likewise formed ties of yet stricter friendship with some of the religious communities in and near Florence, specially with that of St. Gaggio, whose Abbess, Nera ("My own dear Nera," as Catherine called her after her death), was tenderly loved by the Saint. In the intervals of her business with the citizens and magistrates, she resorted to various churches and monasteries, and it was probably at this time that she was often seen by Blessed John Dominic in the Church of Santa Maria Novella. Writing to his mother Paola, many years later, he reminds her of this circumstance. "I saw her at Santa Maria Novella in Florence, and I think you yourself must also many times have seen her there when she was in ecstasy, rapt out of her bodily senses, and remaining for a long time motionless as if dead." This is the wonderful feature in the character of Catherine; it had as many sides as a cut diamond, and each side reflected its own exquisite colour. Now engaged in weighty negotiations for the pacification of her country, and braving all human respect, as she lays before the eyes of the Pontiff the wounds inflicted by bad pastors, who had drained Italy of her life-blood; now instructing and reforming religious Communities that had fallen into decay, or building up others in the spiritual life; now beheld in her hours of privacy rapt in ecstasy and dead to things of self; and now giving rules of Christian life to persons as opposite in their calling and intellectual calibre as Ristoro Canigiani, the scholar and advocate, and Monna Agnes, the tailor's wife.

Her letters to Ristoro form a series by themselves, and contain a body of instruction for the sanctification of persons living in the world, which for their prudence and practical utility have never been surpassed. At the time that she was dictating these admirable compositions she was sending a good scolding to her female friends in Florence, who, after her departure from the city, had got themselves into a vexatious quarrel, all out of their love for her. They had undertaken to defend her against malicious

tongues, and they did not defend her wisely. So Catherine writes a joint letter to them all. "I shall scold you well, my dear daughters, for forgetting what I told you. I recommended you to have nothing at all to say to those who might speak against me. Now, remember I will not have you begin it all over again. My faults are many, so many, alas! that I could not confess them all. When any persons speak to you of them, tell them to have compassion on me, and to pray to God that I may change my life; He will punish my faults, and reward those who bear with me for His love. As to Monna Paula, I will not have you put yourselves in a temper with her. Try and think that she acts like a mother who wishes to see if her daughter has virtue or not. I confess sincerely I find nothing good in myself, but I trust that God in His mercy will change and correct me. Courage, then, and do not torment yourselves any more; let us all be united in divine charity, and then neither men nor devils will be able to separate us." (Letter 366.)

In another Letter (No. 367), addressed to "Three Florentine ladies," she gives some admirable practical advice on the folly of choosing many spiritual advisers, and following the direction of none. Nor in noticing her relations with her Florentine friends can we omit an anecdote related by Caffarini in his Supplement, though without indicating at what time the event occurred. There was, he says, a certain noble lady living in Florence named Donna Christofora, who had in her service a waiting woman named Elizabeth. The latter had a most ardent desire to see and speak with Catherine, whose fame resounded throughout Tuscany. She wished to consult her on some interior troubles, but her state of servitude rendered it impossible for her to undertake the journey to Siena in order to satisfy her wishes. One night, however, Catherine entered her chamber after she had retired to rest, and, sitting down beside her, consoled her with charitable words. Elizabeth was able to explain all her troubles, which the Saint entirely dissipated; and after a long and sweet conference she disappeared, leaving the poor woman full of consolation.[1]

[1] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 5, § 4.

The notice in Blessed John Dominic's letter of Catherine's habitual visits to Santa Maria Novella has its special interest, as it enables us to fix with certainty one locality in Florence associated with her presence. Begun in the year 1279, this beautiful church was not completed at the time of Catherine's visit; its decorations were still in progress, and on one series of frescoes, only recently finished, her eyes must often have rested with pleasure, whether for the sake of the subject of which they treat, or of the hand that executed them. We allude to those scenes from the Life of St. Dominic, which were painted in the old chapter house [1] (as is supposed) by the Sienese artist, Simon Memmi. To so ardent a lover of her glorious Father as was St. Catherine, it must have been a delight to have gazed at his noble form represented again and again as the Preacher, the Apostle, the Lover of Souls; she was one, too, who could relish the quaint device of her fellow-citizen, who has depicted the followers of sin and error as wolves dispersed and driven away by black and white dogs, the *Domini Canes;* and from those other grand and solemn representations of the Sacred Passion, of Judgment, Heaven and Hell, on whose faded colours careless eyes now come and gaze as on mere artistic curiosities, *she* received, perhaps, an illumination, a comprehension of the eternal truths, which rapt her in ecstasy, and drew her upwards to a region wherein the turbulent dissensions that raged outside those walls were for the time forgotten.

We must also assign to this time spent in Florence certain visits which Catherine seems to have paid to various places in the neighbourhood of the city, where local tradition still preserves the traces of her presence. Thus in the Villa Petrognano in Val d'Elza, there is a fountain from which she is said to have drunk, and which is on that account held in veneration by the people. A little chapel is built over it, and an inscription commemorates the fact. At Pontorno another interesting tradition declares that she came thither at the time when the church bell was being

[1] Now the Capella degli Spagnuoli. The paintings are commonly attributed to Simon Memmi and Taddeo Gaddi, though the fact is disputed by Crowe and Cavalcaselle.

founded, and that she cast into the melted metal her own ring. The inhabitants bestowed on the bell the name of "Catherine," and consider themselves to have been frequently preserved from tempests by ringing it. Gigli, in his *Vocabolario*, mentions these anecdotes, and also speaks of another inscription to be seen in the Church of St. Antonio de' Fanciulli, in memory of her residence near that spot, at the time of her embassy to the city. Of Vallombrosa, and her relations with its austere hermits, we must speak in a separate chapter.

Meanwhile the leaders of the more moderate party at Florence were urging their colleagues to place the renewed negotiations for peace in Catherine's hands. Soderini and Buonacorso di Lapo were among those whose influence and persistency for the moment won the day; and presenting themselves to the Saint they besought her to save their city from destruction, by undertaking to go to Avignon, and plead their cause with the Sovereign Pontiff in a personal interview. One and all assured her of their sorrow for what had passed, and their readiness to humble themselves in any way that the Holy Father might require. Catherine's quick discernment disposed her to doubt the perfect sincerity of some, at least, of the speakers. "See, gentlemen," she said, "if you really have the intention of submitting to the Sovereign Pontiff, and if you desire me to present you to your Father as children willing to humble yourselves, I will shrink from no trouble or labour in bringing this business to a happy issue; but on no other conditions will I go."[1]

They all declared that those were their true sentiments, and that they desired nothing better than that she should so represent the case to the Holy Father. On this understanding Catherine consented to accept the difficult and responsible task; but before starting she wrote to Raymund, expressing her ardent desire to see that removal of scandals, and that renewal of fervour for which she was ready to give her life. And she concludes with a

[1] *Per altro modo io non v'andarei.* The whole narrative, even to the very words spoken, as given by the Saint herself in her letter to Buonacorso (Let. 215), written from Avignon, and reminding him of what had passed.

touching message to the Holy Father, whom as yet she had never seen. "Tell the Christ on earth that when I have seen him I shall sing my *Nunc dimittis*."

It was the beginning of June when Catherine and her companions left Florence. A manuscript by Buonconti, preserved in the Bandinelli family, informs us that the little party included the three Pisan brothers, Thomas, Gerard, and Francis Buonconti, besides Stephen Maconi, and three of the Saint's religious sisters. F. Bartholomew Dominic and Felix of Massa were also of the party: Raymund, Neri, and Master John III. awaited them at Avignon. We do not know with any certainty what route they took. Pius II., in the Bull of St. Catherine's canonisation, however, speaks of her having crossed "the Alps and the Apennines" in the service of the Church; and it is therefore most probable that she performed the journey by land. This is also in accordance with local tradition, which affirms her to have passed through Bologna on her way, where she visited the tomb of St. Dominic in the church of the Friar Preachers, and beholding their cemetery, is said to have exclaimed, "How sweet it would be to lie there!" In any case it was a journey which involved fatigue and even danger, and must have occupied some time. The date of her departure from Florence has not been preserved; but that of her arrival at Avignon is given by her own pen in a letter to Sano di Maco, then in Siena: "By God's grace," she says, "we arrived in Avignon twenty-six days ago, and I have already spoken to the Holy Father and to some of the Cardinals and other prelates of the Church, and have done a good deal in the affairs which brought us here. We reached Avignon June 18th, 1376."[1]

[1] Letter 214.

CHAPTER VII

The Court of Avignon, 1376

ON the platform of the great *Rocher des Doms*, which overlooks the whole city of Avignon, rises a pile of buildings wherein the fortress, the palace, and the cathedral are blended together in strange and picturesque confusion. You ascend to the cathedral, which is the most ancient part of the structure, by a flight of steps known as the *Escalier du Pater*, from the circumstance of its numbering as many steps as there are words in the Pater Noster. By the side of the cathedral stands the Papal palace, which Froissart calls "the strongest and finest building in the world." Begun by John XXII., it received additions from each of his successors, and was only completed in 1364 by Urban V., who added that tower of St. Lawrence, which was called by the name of *Rome*, as though to keep alive the memory of the widowed city in the hearts of her exiled Pontiffs.

The city of Avignon as yet formed no part of the dominions of France. It had been purchased by Clement VI. for 80,000 florins from Joanna of Naples, who ruled this part of the country as Countess of Provence. During the long wars with England which raged with short interruption throughout the fourteenth century, the peace and security which were banished from every other province found refuge here; and, sheltered from the clash of arms, the Avignon of the Popes became the home of the arts, and the centre of a luxurious civilisation. Churches and monasteries, palaces and public buildings of all kinds multiplied; the unceasing chimes of its many bells earned for it the title of *la ville sonnante*, while magnificent walls arose of squared stone,

flanked with nine and thirty grotesque towers; structures which time's destroying hand has as yet spared, and only imparted to them the mellow tint as of a faded leaf, which but augments their beauty.

Strange, indeed, that to such a capital there should have come such an ambassadress as Catherine Benincasa, the humble *Popolana* of Siena. On that June evening when her little company entered the city gates she found herself in an atmosphere entirely new to her. With all their vices, the capitals of Tuscany, with which alone she had hitherto been acquainted, cherished in their citizens a certain robustness of character which grew out of their republican institutions. If Siena cultivated the arts with passionate enthusiasm, and if the Florentine merchants were second only to those of England in their pursuit of wealth, yet greater even than their love of money, or of the arts, was their love of liberty; and the democratic forms so jealously cherished among them, fruitful as they were of many social evils, had at least protected them from courtly corruptions. But the character of a *Court* was precisely that most unmistakably stamped on the society as well as on the exterior aspect of Avignon; nor were the disadvantages of such a state of things diminished by the fact that the courtiers were for the most part ecclesiastics. We have elsewhere spoken of the abuses which prevailed in Italy, and which had been so unsparingly denounced by St. Catherine; of the luxury and worldliness too common among the prelates of the Church, and of the vices of the inferior clergy. But how could these abuses be remedied, so long as the city, which was now regarded as the capital of Christendom, presented such an example as we find portrayed in the pages of John Pino of Toulouse? As the modest band of pilgrims made their way through those streets of Oriental magnificence, they would have met the equipages of cardinals and prelates, the trappings of whose very horses blazed with gold, attended by crowds of servants in costumes of extravagant magnificence. Avignon had its ladies, too, the nieces and sisters of great prelates, who thought it no inconsistency to display themselves and their finery in those same streets, and whose

influence at court was reported as often more powerful than it was edifying. Much has often been said by ecclesiastical historians of the evils of nepotism; but at Avignon the abuse had taken a form which could hardly fail to give scandal. It was commonly said that the road to promotion was through the *salons* of these great dames; and those who desired a rich benefice were advised to pay their court to Miramonde de Mauléon or Énémonde de Boulbon (the nieces, respectively, of Clement V. and Innocent VI.), or to some other lady as skilled in the "*gaie science*," as she was nearly allied in blood to eminent and illustrious prelates. Provence, it will be remembered, was the native soil of the muses of the Middle Ages, and these muses often bore but a doubtful sort of character. In any case it was unfortunate that the temporary capital of the Church should have been fixed in a region so given up to the influence of "singers, actors, cooks, mimics, and troubadours."[1] A motley crowd of such personages crowded thither day after day, and found liberal patronage at the hands of those who, in that soft and delicious climate, seemed to forget that life had any more serious end than amusement and enjoyment.

A residence was assigned to the use of Catherine and her companions, by order of Gregory, in the house of John de Regio. Stephen Maconi calls it "a handsome house with a richly adorned chapel," but when purchased by Cardinal Brancaccio in the seventeenth century, and presented to the college of the Jesuits, nothing remained but a tower, in which, though the chapel had disappeared, a room was still shown as St. Catherine's so late as 1706. Two days after her arrival she was admitted by the Pope to an audience,[2] and for the first time the holy maiden of Siena and the Vicar of Christ met face to face.

Gregory's appearance was the index of his character. Small in stature, of a pale and delicate complexion, Peter du Rogier de

[1] John Pino, Vita Div. Cath.

[2] Capecelatro says he received her in public Consistory; but there is no expression in Raymund's account which seems to indicate that it was anything but a private audience.

Beaufort-Turenne bore on his person none of the marks of commanding will or splendid genius. He looked a man fitter to be loved than feared; and distinguished, as he undoubtedly was, for modesty, fidelity to his word, and goodness of heart, he lacked that force of character which seemed needed for one who would stem the torrent of an evil time, or accomplish great and difficult achievements. Yet in the councils of Divine Providence such an undertaking was reserved to Gregory XI., and it was from the poor dyer's daughter of Siena that he was to receive, if not the inspiration to resolve upon, yet undoubtedly the courage to execute it. He could not have been insensible to the irresistible charm which has been attested by all who knew her; and he probably felt the power of that great soul, the strength and grandeur of which one of her disciples has described by saying, that "you could not look at her without trembling." There was, nevertheless, some difficulty in their holding any intercourse together, for Catherine spoke only in the Tuscan dialect, which to Gregory, unhappily, was an unknown tongue. He himself addressed her in Latin, and Raymund of Capua acted as interpreter between them. Still, even with this disadvantage, it did not take long for Catherine to win the Pontiff's entire confidence. She pleaded the cause of peace with her lips, as she had already done by her letters, and that so successfully that Gregory placed the whole matter at issue with the Florentines in her hands. "The Holy Father," says Raymund, "in my presence and by my mouth, committed the treaty of peace to Catherine's decision, saying to her, 'In order to show you that I sincerely desire peace, I commit the entire negotiation into your hands; only be careful of the honour of the Church.'"

F. Bartholomew Dominic, who accompanied the Saint to Avignon, lets us know what Raymund does not notice, namely, that on first coming to the court Catherine had to encounter predjudices, not only on the part of the cardinals and prelates, but even of Gregory himself. "Almost the whole court of Rome," he says, "rose up against her; nevertheless, their minds soon underwent a wonderful change, so that those who were at first her perse-

cutors became her greatest benefactors." He names among these the Lord (*i.e.*, Archbishop) of Bari, afterwards Urban VI., who at this time made his first acquaintance with Catherine.[1]

After leaving the presence of the Pope, Catherine held conferences with some of the cardinals and others of his councillors, and was able in a few days to give hopes to her friends at Siena of a speedy and favourable termination of her enterprise. Writing to Sano di Maco about three weeks later, she says, "I have seen the Holy Father and several cardinals, and other lords of the court, and the grace of our sweet Saviour has already done much in the business which brought us here; therefore rejoice in Him, and be full of confidence." And indeed the obstacles which had hitherto opposed themselves to the conclusion of peace, and which had rendered fruitless the previous embassy of Barbadori, all yielded to the persuasive eloquence of the Saint; and her mission would have been crowned with complete success, but for the bad faith of the Florentines themselves. It had been agreed before Catherine left Florence, that as soon as she had arrived at Avignon, other ambassadors should be despatched to the Papal court to treat for peace in a formal manner, on such terms as she might have been able to secure. Weeks passed on, however, and no ambassadors appeared. But instead there came rumours of fresh taxes having been levied on the clergy; and Catherine, who instinctively felt that the hindrance of her efforts came from "Eight of War," addressed them a letter of remonstrance, which gives us a clear idea of the situation of affairs. "I have great cause to complain of you," she says, "if it is true, as is here reported, that you have taxed the clergy; you have no right to do so, and it would be a great obstacle in the way of concluding peace, for the Holy Father when he hears it will be naturally indignant. I have had an audience with him, and he listened to me most graciously, through the effect of God's goodness and his own. He expressed the most sincere wish for peace, and seemed like a good father who, instead of regarding the offences committed by his son, remembers only that his son has

[1] Process, 1337.

humbled himself for his fault, and is ready to show him mercy. No tongue could tell the joy which this has caused me. After my long conference with him, he told me that if things were as I said he was ready to receive you as his children, and to do whatever I might judge best. It seems to me that he cannot give any further reply until your ambassadors arrive. I wonder that they are not yet come; I shall await their arrival, and will see both them and the Holy Father, and I will then write to you and say what are his dispositions. But I fear you will spoil all with your taxes and your new decrees. I beg of you not to do so, for the love of Jesus crucified, and for your own interest."

It would seem that this rumour about the new taxes was a false report, spread abroad by the secret malice of those who had no desire to see the Florentines admitted to terms of reconciliation. On the other hand, the non-arrival of their ambassadors gave the enemies of peace grounds only too plausible for casting discredit on the whole affair. Gregory himself understood that the Florentines were not to be trusted; and in speaking to Catherine he expressed his misgivings in words which were exactly justified by the event. "Believe me, Catherine," he said, "the Florentines have deceived you, as before now they have deceived me. You will see they will send no ambassadors, or if they do, the ambassadors will conclude nothing." And, in fact, when at last Pazzino Strozzi, Alexander dell' Antella, and Michael Castellani arrived as envoys from the republic, it was plainly to be seen that the conclusion of peace was the last thing contemplated by those from whom they had received their instructions. In justice to the Florentines, however, it must be borne in mind that the parties at whose entreaty Catherine had undertaken her journey, were not the same as those who had despatched the envoys. The mischief arose from the vicious system of the Florentine government, which admitted of power being vested in several distinct bodies who were often of opposing views and interests, with no one supreme and responsible head. Soderini and the more moderate party in the republic had been sincere enough in soliciting Catherine to make their submission to the Pope; but

after her departure their views had been overruled by the more powerful "Eight of War," whose only object was to prolong their own term of power, which would cease with the proclamation of peace. They had consented therefore to despatch the envoys, but with a purpose very different from that which Catherine had designed, desiring only to soothe the irritation which had been roused at the Roman court by their proceedings, but with no purpose of submission.[1]

As soon as they arrived in Avignon, Catherine requested an interview, in which after reminding them of the mission which had been intrusted to her by the Magistrates of Florence, she informed them that the Sovereign Pontiff had listened graciously to her representations, and had placed the matter in her hands. It was in their power, therefore, to obtain peace on the most favourable conditions. If they dared not trust themselves to the French cardinals who had caused the rejection of their former overtures, they might safely place themselves in the hands of one who was ready to give her life to restore peace to Italy. To this the envoys replied briefly and coldly that they had no instructions to treat on the subject *with her*, but only with the Pope; and on her reminding them of the pledge so solemnly given her at Florence before she would consent to undertake the mission, they only returned an abrupt and insolent refusal to have anything to say to her on the affairs of the republic.

An ordinary character, if placed in so mortifying a position as that in which Catherine now found herself, would have taken little further trouble in the cause of the treacherous Florentines; but no motive of self-exaltation or desire of renown had prompted her to enter on her present undertaking. A dead body is not more insensible to pain or pleasure, than she was to all those human considerations which have their root in self-love. She

[1] It is Scipio Ammirato, a partisan of the Florentines, who gives this explanation of their conduct. "The Eight," he says, "thought it necessary to send an embassy to the Pope to calm somewhat the jealous suspicions of which they were the object; *but they did not on that account renounce their projects of war.*" (Stor. Fior., lib. xiii. p. 699.)

desired peace, because in the continuance of hostilities she beheld the loss of souls, and the offence of God; and the contempt and ingratitude of the rebellious Florentines produced absolutely no change in her purposes regarding them. "Catherine saw through their dishonesty," says Raymund, "and perceived that the prediction of the Holy Father had been correct; nevertheless, she did not discontinue her solicitations to Gregory XI., but continued as before to plead that he would show them the clemency of a father, rather than the severity of a judge."[1]

However, she expressed her opinion on the conduct of the Magistrates in a letter to Buonacorso di Lapo. "Alas! my dear brother," she says, "I am distressed at the means they are taking here for asking peace from the Holy Father; they ask it more in words than in truth. You remember that when I consented to come here, you and the other Magistrates seemed repentant for the faults committed, and ready to submit to the Holy Father in order to obtain mercy. I said to you then, that if you really meant to humble yourselves, and to allow me to present you to your Father as contrite children, I would shrink from no trouble or fatigue, but that otherwise I would not go. And you all declared that you joyfully consented to these terms. That was the only right way of acting, and if you had persevered in it you would have obtained the most glorious peace. I do not say this at random, for I know what the dispositions of his Holiness were. But now we have taken quite the wrong road, and are employing the deceitful ways of the world, contradicting our words by our actions, and so rather irritating the Holy Father than appeasing him.

"When your envoys came here they did not act as they should have done with the servants of God; and it is now impossible for me to ascertain if you have spoken to them in the same sense as you did to me, when giving them their credentials . . . If you had trusted your interests with the servants of God, they would have obtained an excellent peace for you from the Holy Father. But this you have not done. I am sorry for it, because of the

[1] Leg., Part 3, ch. vi.

offence of God, and the injury you do yourselves, and you do not see the terrible consequences which your perseverance in this line of conduct will certainly produce." The reader will not fail to notice that in this simple and straightforward remonstrance, not a word appears expressive of a woman's mortified vanity; and so far was she from abandoning the cause of the people who had treated her so unworthily, that at her urgent solicitations Gregory agreed to condescend to yet further overtures, in the hopes of winning back his rebellious children, and saving them from the horrors of war, as it were, against their will.

In the meantime, the extraordinary favour with which Catherine was regarded by the Holy Father was causing much perplexity in the court circles of Avignon. That one so wholly separate from the world should have been chosen to mediate between the greatest of the Italian republics and the Holy See, was in itself a difficult problem; but the amazement of the French lords and ladies was increased when they formed a close acquaintance with this wonderful woman, and took notice of her indifference to the splendour which everywhere met her eye, and the freedom of speech with which she passed her judgment on the courtly crowds around her. On one occasion, soon after her arrival in Avignon, when she was conversing with the Holy Father (Raymund of Capua, as usual, acting as interpreter), Catherine expressed her sorrow at finding the Roman court, which should have been a Paradise of heavenly virtues, stained by so many grievous vices. The Pope, astonished at her words, turned to Raymund and asked how long they had been in the city; and understanding it was only a few days, "And how," he asked, "have you in so short a time been able to gain so much information as to the manners of the Roman Court?" "Then," says Raymund, "suddenly changing her attitude of profound humility and reverence, she raised herself with an air of majesty, and said, 'To the honour of Almighty God I will dare to say that I was more conscious of the infection of the sins committed in the court of Rome when I dwelt in my native city, than those are who daily commit them.' The Pope remained silent, and I have always remembered her words with astonishment;

nor shall I ever forget the dignity with which she feared not to speak to so great a Prelate."

Her wonderful knowledge of souls was never more signally displayed than at this time, and enabled her to detect the concealed profligacy which often lurked under the fair outside of those with whom she came in contact. No mannerism of piety could deceive the keen spiritual instincts of the Saint. "It often happened both to me, and others who accompanied her on her journeys," says Raymund, "that we found ourselves with her in companies altogether new to us, where we saw for the first time persons of honourable and respectable appearance, who were in reality addicted to every vice. Catherine knew the state of their interior directly, and would refuse so much as to look at them or answer them if they addressed her on spiritual subjects. And if they persisted she would say, 'First let us purify ourselves from our faults, and be delivered from the bondage of Satan, and then we will converse about God.' In this way she would soon rid us of the presence of these hypocrites, whom we afterwards discovered were plunged in incorrigible habits of sin."

It was in this way that she conducted herself towards some of the fair dames of Avignon who sought an interview with her to satisfy their curiosity, and who imagined it necessary to assume the airs of *dévotes* when they appeared in the presence of so holy a personage. But no pious grimaces could ever impose on Catherine. One day a lady presented herself at the house, who, to the unsophisticated eyes of Father Raymund, bore every semblance of respectability; her demeanour was so modest and her conversation so edifying, that it caused the good father no little surprise when he perceived Catherine resolutely turn her back, as though she would neither see nor be seen by her. On the departure of this visitor he ventured to remonstrate with the Saint for her apparent rudeness; but she soon explained the matter. "O Father," she said, "if you had been conscious as I was of the stench of sin that made itself sensible whilst that woman was speaking to us, I think it would verily have turned you sick." He took some pains to ascertain the real circum-

stances and character of the person in question, and found indeed that her life was a deplorable scandal.[1]

The Countess of Valentinois, sister to the Pope, and a person of real and unaffected piety, had succeeded in obtaining several interviews with Catherine, whose conversation inspired her with great esteem and veneration. Desiring much to be present on some occasion when the Saint should approach Holy Communion, she made known her wish to Raymund, who promised to satisfy her. On the following Sunday Catherine went to the chapel, and making her preparation for Communion, was as usual rapt in ecstasy. Calling Stephen Maconi, who was present, Raymund bade him go at once to the palace, and tell the Countess that Catherine would communicate that morning. The Countess was just about to hear Mass, but on receiving the message she at once set out for Catherine's residence, accompanied by a number of persons equally curious as herself, but considerably less devout. Among others was Elys de Turenne, wife of the Pope's nephew, a young and giddy woman of the world, and an utter stranger to divine things. While the Countess was praying with all earnestness, Elys was examining Catherine, whose ecstasy she supposed to be feigned in order to attract attention; she perceived that the Saint wore nothing but sandals; so, stooping down under pretence of devoutly kissing her feet, she drew out a large pin, and with it pierced one of them through several times so as to draw blood. Catherine, however, remained motionless, for at such times, says Stephen, you might have cut off her feet sooner than have moved her. But when the crowd had withdrawn, and she resumed the use of her senses, she felt a sharp pain in her foot, and found herself unable to walk. Her companions, perceiving this, had their attention drawn to the cause, and found the bleeding wounds that had been thus wantonly inflicted.[2]

[1] "Se voi aveste sentito il puzzo che io sentiva mentr' ella meco parlava, voi avreste vomitato." (Leg., Part 2, ch. iv.) St. Antoninus says of this person, "Erat cujusdam magni prælati ecclesiæ concubina."

[2] Process, 1374. The cruel experiment of Elys de Turenne, mentioned above, had once before been tried on St. Catherine by a Dominican Friar, named F. Pietro Landi, who did not believe in her ecstasies, and who, to

There were wiser and more respectable judges than Elys of Turenne, however, who expressed their incredulity as to the real character of her whose name was in everybody's mouth. By desire of the Pope, Catherine had spoken several times in presence of many assembled prelates and cardinals, and her eloquence and heavenly doctrine drew from them expressions of wonder and admiration; "Never man spoke like this!" they exclaimed; "it is surely no woman who speaks, but the Holy Spirit dwelling in her." The report of her marvellous gifts, and of the impression they had made on the Pope and the cardinals soon spread abroad, and three prelates of very high rank sought an interview with Gregory for the purpose of speaking to him on the subject. "Holy Father," they said, "what think you? Is this Catherine of Siena as saintly as she is reported to be?' "In truth," replied the Pope, "I believe her to be a Saint." "If it please your Holiness," they continued, "we will go and see her." "Do so," he replied, "and I think you will be greatly edified." So they proceeded to her house about the hour of None, and knocking at the door, it was opened by Stephen Maconi, who relates the story. "Tell Catherine," said one of them, "that we wish to speak with her." The message was delivered, and Catherine at once came down, attended by Father John Tantucci, and certain other religious. They bade her be seated, and at once began to address her in a haughty and insolent manner, endeavouring to irritate her by their wounding speeches. "We have come from his Holiness," they said, "and we desire to know if it be really true that the Florentines sent you here, as is pretended. Have they not got a man among them capable of undertaking such an important affair? And if they did not send you, we marvel how an insignificant little woman like you should presume to converse with the Holy Father on so weighty a business." Catherine showed no signs of disturbance, but replied

test their truth, pierced the Saint's foot with a large needle during the time she was rapt out of her senses. Simon of Cortona tells the story in his Deposition, and adds that this religious died a miserable death out of his Order. (Process, fol. 212.)

with a humility and firmness that filled them with astonishment. When she had satisfied them on this point, they proceeded to put to her many difficult questions on the spiritual life, and to examine her touching her ecstasies, and her extraordinary manner of life, reminding her that Satan often transforms himself into an angel of light, and inquiring what means she adopted in order to avoid his deceits. "The conference lasted until late in the evening," says Stephen, "and I was present the whole time. Sometimes Father John would endeavour to answer for her, but though he was a learned doctor in theology, they shut him up in very few words, saying, 'You should be ashamed to speak in such a manner in our presence. Leave her alone, for she satisfies us much better than you do.' One of these prelates was a learned professor of the Order of St. Francis,[1] and seemed as though unwilling to accept Catherine's replies. But at last the other two gave over their attack, and took part with her against him." "What more would you have?" they said; "she has certainly explained all these matters better and more fully than we ever found them set forth by holy writers." On this they began to dispute among themselves, but at last departed, well satisfied with the result of their visit, and reported to the Pope that "they had never met a soul at once so humble and so illuminated." Gregory was not a little displeased when he understood in what manner they had tried to move her to anger, and excused himself to the Saint, assuring her that it had been done without his knowledge or consent. He said, moreover, that should these prelates come again to speak with her, she was to shut the doors against them."[2] The next day Master Francis of Siena,[3] the Pope's physician, came to see Stephen. "Do you

[1] This was Bertrand de Lagery, Bishop of Glandevez, afterwards an adherent of the Antipope.

[2] Fen., p. 14, c. 18.

[3] This was Master Francis Casini, to whom one of Catherine's letters is addressed (Let. 227.) She met him again at Rome, where he was physician to Urban VI., who employed him in many affairs. He wrote several letters to the magistrates of Siena "in so barbarous a style," says Burlamacchi, "as would cause compassion," and became chief magistrate of his native city in

know those three prelates who called at your house yesterday?" he said; "I can assure you that if the learning of those three were put in a balance, and the learning of all the rest of the court of Rome in another, the learning of those three doctors would weigh against it all. Wherefore I tell you this, that if they had not found Catherine's wisdom and virtue truly solid, she would have made as bad a venture in coming hither as ever she did in her life."

No doubt during this singular scene Father John III. made his own reflections; for his memory must have recalled that other occasion when, in company with Master Gabriel of Volterra, he had first entered Catherine's presence with the like intention of "*shutting her up.*"[1] The humiliation which he that day received at the hands of the three learned doctors was a fair penance for his former offence; and we would venture a shrewd guess that some of the party did not fail to rally him on so remarkable a coincidence.

1390. His nephew was created a Cardinal, and his tomb may still be seen in S. Maria Maggiore. Master Francis himself was a friend of Petrarch, who wrote him a letter.

[1] See p. 147.

CHAPTER VIII

The Departure from Avignon, 1376

CATHERINE'S mission on behalf of the Florentines had, as we have seen, been frustrated through their bad faith, and in the eyes of many her journey to Avignon had doubtless been pronounced a failure. But the providential end for which she had been brought thither was yet to be accomplished, and a far more extraordinary success was to crown her enterprise in the restoration of the Sovereign Pontiff to his long-forsaken See of Rome. Not that the first suggestion of this step is to be attributed to our Saint; Gregory himself had long contemplated, and even resolved upon it; and in the beginning of the year 1375, he had solemnly announced his intention in letters addressed to the Emperor and the other sovereigns of Europe. He had done more than this. When Charles V., king of France, filled with consternation at the prospect of such a change, despatched his brother the Duke of Anjou to represent to the Pope that his health would suffer if he ventured to quit his native air, that Rome was a sort of desert, and its citizens a set of turbulent savages, Gregory replied with firmness and dignity that "whatever it might cost him to separate himself from a country so dear to him as France, he felt it his duty in the interests of the Church to return to that holy city which was the true See Apostolic; and that with the help of God he should do so in the coming autumn."[1]

But the resolutions which determine human acts pass through two distinct stages. One is the decision of the judgment, com-

[1] Rinaldi, Ann. 1375, n. 22.

paratively easy to men of clear mind unprejudiced by passion. The other is the far more difficult decision of the will. That the two are not identical, who does not know, who to his sorrow sees the right, but lacks the strength and courage to accomplish it? In the disproportion between these two kinds of decision lies written the history of all mental struggles, and the explanation of those amazing disappointments which make us marvel how men so wise in thought and word can often be so feeble and faulty in action.

Gregory had thought out the problem, and satisfactorily convinced himself that its true solution was in a return to Rome. Nor was it any wonder that he should have come to such a conclusion. It was a word re-echoed from the lips of all those whom men most held in veneration. Full sixty years had passed since Dante had reminded the Cardinals that it was their duty to elect a Pontiff who should restore to Rome the sun that had suffered eclipse;[1] and Petrarch, to whom, if to any one, Avignon was dear, had nevertheless nothing closer to his heart than the desire of witnessing the resurrection, as he terms it, of the eternal city. He even ventured to address a poetical epistle to Benedict XII., in which, by a bold personification, he makes Rome plead her own cause, as a spouse forsaken by her bridegroom. "Behold me at your feet," she is made to exclaim; "were I as in the days of my youth I need not declare my name; but worn out as I am, and disfigured by poverty and sorrow, I must name myself to be recognised. Know, then, that I am ROME, once famous throughout the whole world: can you discern any traits of my ancient beauty? Yet, alas! it is less age which has effaced them, than the long regret for your absence!" It was a strange device for setting the truth before the eyes of the Pontiff; but in a second epistle the poet continues his allegory in a yet more touching strain. "Holy Father," he writes, "I have seen at your palace door a venerable lady whom I seemed to know, yet could not name; she was sad, and her appearance showed signs of poverty and neglect, yet withal she bore the traces of unforgotten majesty.

[1] Ep. vii. (ed. Wite.) p. 48.

Royalty was in her countenance, and she spoke with the voice of command; even through her rags you could discern her mighty soul. I asked her name, but she hardly dared pronounce it; only through her broken sobs did I catch the name of ROME."[1]

Yet severer and more terrible were the warnings and remonstrances addressed to Gregory XI. by St. Bridget of Sweden. Her dying words were carried to him in 1373 by Alphonsus Vadaterra, and were calculated to rouse the most sluggish conscience.[2] And meanwhile his Legates never wearied of conjuring him to come, and to come quickly, if he would prevent a frightful scandal and restore peace to Italy. To one and all Gregory replied by saying that it was indeed his purpose to come; but weeks and months passed on and brought fresh pretexts for delay, and fresh obstacles on the part of the Cardinals; nor was it until he had been fortified by the heroic presence of Catherine that he at length gained from her the courage to obey his convictions. In the letters she had addressed to him before her coming to Avignon she had urged his speedy return in words which, if they displayed less poetic grace than those of Petrarch, had yet a winning sweetness that was not to be found in the terrific adjurations of St. Bridget. On her arrival at the court she found the question one of daily discussion, and quickly comprehended where the real difficulty lay. The upright mind and tender heart of Gregory were overborne by the opposition of his French councillors, who found no difficulty in devising arguments to support their own wishes. In particular they set before him the example of Clement IV., who made it a rule to do nothing without consulting the Sacred College. A greater Pontiff, they argued, had never lived; and would Gregory depart from this wise precedent, and dare to take so momentous a step on his own sole responsibility? Gregory listened and hesitated, and finally appears to have sent a message to Catherine to ask her opinion of the matter. Her reply is worthy of being studied, so skilfully does she in her lucid and inartificial language unravel the fallacy, and

[1] Petrarch, lib. i., epist. 2 and 4.

[2] Rev. S. Brid., lib. iv. chap. cxxxix.

defeat the manœuvres of these false councillors. "Holy Father," she says, "I, your miserable little daughter Catherine, desire to see you immovable as a rock in your holy resolutions, so that you may be able to resist all the cunning artifices by which the enemy would prevent your return, and hinder all the good which he knows it will cause. Your Cardinals allege the example of Clement IV., who would undertake nothing without the advice of the Sacred College. It is true he often renounced what seemed to him to be best, in order to follow their advice. But, alas! those who cite the example of Clement IV. are careful to say nothing at all about that of Urban V., who in things doubtful did, indeed, ask their advice, but in things which to him were as clear and evident as the duty of your return is to you, he followed his own judgment, and did not trouble himself about contrary opinions. It seems to me that the counsel of the good should always tend to the love of God, the salvation of souls, and the reform of Holy Church, not to the love of self: and that such counsel should be listened to rather than that which proceeds from men who love only the honours and pleasures of this life. Oh, I beg of your Holiness, for the love of Jesus crucified, not to delay. Hasten, and fear nothing; if God is with you, nothing will be against you. Hasten, and you will restore the crimson bloom of life to the cheeks of your Spouse, who is lying now in the pallor of death."[1] The famous appeal to the practice of Clement IV. soon fell to the ground, but the Cardinals had a more powerful weapon in reserve. They urged—as they and their predecessors had continued for more than sixty years to urge—the danger of returning to a country so torn with civil disorders as Italy. Nay, they whispered that the Italians were skilful assassins; and they asserted as a well-known fact that the poison was already prepared which would be administered to the Pontiff as soon as he had set foot within the walls of Rome. He would then leave the soil of France which he loved, and which loved him so well, to find a cruel and ignominious death in Italy! Did not every one know that Urban V. had been poisoned, and

[1] Letter 7.

that precisely at the moment when he was preparing a second time to return to Rome? Would he not take warning by such an example?

It must be owned that in their eagerness to scare the timid heart of Gregory, the Cardinals had here committed themselves to a notable blunder. For if Urban V., who died at Avignon, had been, as they asserted, the victim of poison, it is plain that the poison must have been administered, not at Rome but in their own city; and if, furthermore, he had been thus assassinated at the moment when he purposed returning to Italy, the crime must have been perpetrated by those who sought to hinder his return, —a line of argument which would bring the matter very close to their own doors. Nevertheless, they made as much as they could of the spectral fears which they had thus conjured up; and having discovered how greatly Catherine's influence weighed with the Pope, who regarded her as a Saint, they contrived that a letter should be delivered to him, purporting to come from another person of reputed sanctity,[1] which warned him not to go to Rome if he were not prepared to be immediately assassinated.

Catherine was of too fearless a nature herself to allow of much importance being attached to these appeals to cowardice. To her it seemed impossible that any man could be held back by fear from doing what he knew was right. And she quickly exposed the miserably bad logic of her opponents, and the transparent forgery of which they had been guilty. "This letter," she said, "purports to come from a just and virtuous man; it will not be difficult for your Holiness to ascertain if this be so, and for the honour of God you are bound to examine into it. For my own part, as far as I can understand the case, its language is not that of a servant of God. It seems to me to be a forgery, and the hand that forged it is not a very skilful one; he ought to be sent back to school, for he writes like a child. Observe, Holy Father, he tries to appeal to the weakest part of human nature, the fears which those entertain who have an excessive love of their own ease and safety, and who shrink from the least bodily suffer-

[1] Supposed to be B. Peter of Arragon.

ing. This is his main argument, but by the grace of God I trust your Holiness cares more for God's honour and the salvation of your flock than for yourself; like a good pastor who is ready to lay down his life for his sheep. Then this false councillor goes on to tell you that your return to Rome would, indeed, be a most holy and excellent thing, only that he is afraid they are preparing poisons for you. He advises you to send trusty men before you, who will find poison ready on the tables (that is, no doubt, in the shops, where they are preparing it), in order to give it to you *in a few days, or in a month, or in a year.* For my part it seems to me you might quite as easily find poison on the tables in Avignon, or any other city, as on those of Rome, *and that in a month, or a year*, according as might suit the purchaser; nevertheless, the writer of this letter would have you send some one to Rome to search for it, and meanwhile delay your journey; and all the time he himself is administering the worst of all poisons; he is trying to prevent you from doing that which God demands of you. If now you do not set out, you will cause a great scandal, and you will be accused of falsehood—you, who sit in the chair of Truth: for you have announced and fixed your return; and if you do not keep your word you will cause trouble and scandal to many hearts. I admire the words of this writer who begins by advising good and holy actions, and then desires you to give them up out of a fear of your bodily safety. That is not the language of the servants of God, who would never abandon their holy undertakings for any bodily or temporal fear, not even for the risk of life itself. Otherwise they would never attain their end, for it is perseverance alone that is crowned with glory. Be firm then to your purpose, most Holy Father; it is the only means of securing peace with your revolted children and the reformation of the Church. Then you will satisfy the desires of those who desire to see you raise the standard of the Holy Cross; and then you will be able to administer to those poor infidels the Blood of the Lamb, of which you hold the key."[1]

[1] Letter 10. The letters to Gregory quoted in this chapter were all written at Avignon, and seem to have been summaries of conversations already held

These last words show us that Catherine had not forgotten the Crusade, and that the difficulties of the time did not seem to her by any means to have closed that question. In fact, Raymund tells us that it was one of the chief objects of her journey to Avignon, and that it often formed the subject of conversation between her and the Pope. As has been elsewhere said, the project was a favourite one with Gregory, though probably his views and plans regarding it partook of the same shadowy character which attached to his other resolutions. If so, Catherine was ready to give them substance. One day when she was in the company of Gregory he adverted to the subject, saying, "First of all, we must establish peace among Christians, and then we will organise a Crusade." "Pardon me, Holy Father," she replied, "but the proclamation of the holy war will be the best means of re-establishing peace among Christians. All the turbulent soldiers who now keep up division among the faithful will cheerfully go and combat in that sacred cause; very few will refuse to serve God in the profession which pleases them, and it will be a means of expiating their offences: the fire will thus be extinguished for want of fuel. You will thereby, Holy Father, accomplish several excellent things at once—you will bestow peace on such Christians as require it, and you will save many great sinners. Should they gain important victories, you could act, in consequence, with the Christian princes; if they are overcome, you will at least have procured salvation to their perishing souls; and besides, you might convert a number of Saracens."[1]

This was the policy she constantly recommended; and she regarded it as the most likely means of putting a stop to that fratricidal contest between France and England which had for years been the open wound of Christendom. Wonderful to say, she made a convert to her views in the person of one who had come to Avignon for the express purpose of counteracting her influence.

with him. They are in Latin, not Italian. Gregory being ignorant of the latter language, the conversations between him and Catherine were necessarily restricted, and she seems, on leaving him, to have dictated their substance to her secretaries, who translated her words into Latin before sending them to the Pope.

[1] Legend, Part 2, chap. x.

This was Louis, Duke of Anjou, brother to Charles V. of France. He was the second son of King John, whom he had replaced as hostage in England. His ambition was greater than his ability, but it would seem that his acquaintance with Catherine for a moment awakened in him nobler and better aspirations than any of which he had hitherto been conscious. He was not content with ceasing to oppose her, he desired to be regarded by her as a friend, and even a disciple. No doubt her very appearance in the midst of that gay and luxurious capital read a silent lesson to many hearts, who, while they had no courage to free themselves from the shackles of a worldly life, could nevertheless feel and do homage to the power of sanctity. They listened to her, as in old time Felix listened to St. Paul, and like him they trembled when she discoursed "of justice, and chastity, and the judgment to come."[1] They gave to truth the homage of a passing sigh that bespoke regret for wasted years, and a kind of wish that better things were possible for them; and then they put the thought away "till a more convenient season," and plunged afresh into the old track of habit. But in the heart of Louis of Anjou the Saint appears to have awakened a deeper interest, and he begged her to accompany him to his castle at Villeneuve, that he might introduce her to his Duchess, and apart from curious eyes might open to her his secret heart. It was all one to Catherine whither she went, if there were question of helping the soul of one of God's creatures. She proceeded then to the royal castle with as much readiness and simplicity as she would have gone to the leper's hospital, if summoned on a mission of charity. Villeneuve was at that time a place of some importance; it was the border fortress of France, and occupied the western bank of the Rhone, Avignon standing on the east. From the platform of the *Rocher des Doms* you look across the river towards its towers on the opposite side, to which you now cross by a wooden bridge. But in the days of St. Catherine the stone bridge built in 1188 by St. Benezet[2] was still standing, with its nineteen arches, and by this

[1] Acts xxiv. 25.

[2] St. Benezet was a poor shepherd boy, who, afflicted at the number of

bridge she crossed to what was then the important border town of Villeneuve-lez-Avignon. She remained there three days during which time Louis gave her his entire confidence. He owned to her that he was weary of the vanities in the midst of which he lived, and that he longed for some way of escape. Would the Crusade open to him such a way? Should he take the Cross and seek the glory which he coveted, not on a European throne, but amid the lances of the infidels? The thought came to him like a gleam of light piercing through the clouds, and Catherine hesitated not to encourage him with her joyous enthusiasm. "I am sure," she wrote to him on returning to Avignon,[1] "that if you fix your eyes on the Lamb sacrificed and consumed with love upon the Cross to deliver you from death, it will excite you to carry out your holy purpose, and will soon banish out of your heart all thought of the vanities and foolish pleasures of the world. They pass like the wind and leave death behind them in the souls of those who possess them. I speak of those whose whole life is given to pleasure and magnificence, to luxury and feasting. It is on these things they spend their riches while the poor are dying of hunger. They seek out abundance of everything delightful—beautiful plate, delicate dishes, and sumptuous clothing—and never give a thought to their poor soul that is perishing of hunger. My dear and sweet lord, my brother in our sweet Jesus, do not let yourself be drawn away by the world in these years of your

persons drowned in crossing the river, which at this spot is rapid and very dangerous, devised a scheme for building a bridge, and actually carried it into effect, directing the work himself. (For the interesting story see his Life in the Bollandists, April 14th. Tom. ii., p. 958.) After his death he was buried in a chapel erected between the second and third arches of the bridge, which is still standing, and where his body remained for five hundred years. In 1669 a great part of the bridge fell, through the swift current of the waters. The coffin was removed and placed in the church of St. Didier, where it still lies. On this occasion, and again in 1674, it was found perfectly incorrupt, unchanged in colour, and even with the eyes bright and lively. St. Benezet is regarded as the patron saint of Avignon. Four arches of his bridge are still standing. No doubt St. Catherine, when she crossed over it, entered the chapel and venerated his relics.

[1] Letter 190.

vigorous and youthful manhood; remember the words of the Blessed Christ, when He told the Jews that they were like sepulchres fair outside, but within full of dead men's bones and of all corruption. Oh, how true are those words! Yes, indeed; those who seem so fair and beautiful in all their costly finery have death in their hearts, which are full of all that is shameful and detestable. But if, in the Divine Goodness, you are steadfastly resolved to change your life, those words will not apply to you. You will raise the holy standard of the Cross, you will efface all your past offences, and God will say to you, "Beloved Son, you have laboured and suffered for Me, come then to the nuptials of eternal life, where is fulness without disgust, hunger without suffering, and pleasure without shame. Far different are the joys of this world; they cost much and have no profit, and the more a man partakes of them the emptier he becomes; he seeks enjoyment, and finds nothing but sadness. It was but yesterday that you experienced the truth of what I say. You had prepared a great entertainment and a magnificent feast, and it all ended in sorrow. God so permitted it that He might show you and those who were with you how vain and empty are all earthly joys."

Catherine is here alluding to an accident which had recently occurred at a great banquet given by the Duke; in the midst of which a great wall suddenly fell and killed several of the guests. Coming at that moment, the event served to foster the serious impressions which Louis had received, and he authorised her to acquaint the Pope with his determination of taking the Cross. She accepted the commission with joy. "Holy Father," she said to Gregory, "I announce to you that you have *two* crusades to undertake. There must be an interior Crusade against bad pastors and all the vices with which the garden of the Church is overgrown; and there must be an exterior Crusade against the infidels. You will tell me that for this last a captain is needed; he is found, and I can offer him to you. The Duke of Anjou, out of devotion to the death of Christ and to the holy Cross, desires to take on him this office. He will see you soon, and

speak of this great affair; for God's sake give him good words, and promise him that his hopes shall be realised."[1]

The deep veneration which the Duke had conceived for Catherine, and the opinion he had formed by experience of her great qualities, led him to entertain the project of taking her to Paris,[2] that she might negotiate a treaty of peace with England. In her humility she declined this mission, though, doubtless, had it been laid on her by obedience, she would have accepted it with as little hesitation as she had shown on other occasions. But without some evident and unmistakable token of God's will, Catherine was never forward in undertaking such responsibilities; however, she did not refuse to write to Charles, and we shall quote from her letter in this place, because for the first time it brings her before us in connection with the affairs of our own country.

It is a remarkable fact that in the part which the Roman Pontiffs took in the quarrel between France and England, they seem to have shown more consideration towards the latter country than might have been expected, either from their own national predilections, or from what would seem to us at first sight to have been the merits of the case. A close study of the action of the Holy See during the whole of that disastrous contest fills us with admiration for the strict impartiality and zeal for the interests of right and justice which were invariably displayed. The right and justice for which the Sovereign Pontiffs contended were something higher than the claims of any particular prince or nation; they pleaded the cause of God; they sought to stop the effusion of Christian blood and the ruin of souls, far dearer to them than the gain of any national advantage; and at every pause in the hostilities, their Legates were constantly at hand to offer their mediation, and urge on both parties to accept terms of peace. When we remember that the Popes of Avignon were all Frenchmen, and all but exclusively surrounded by French councillors, their abstention from a party view in this matter, and the noble manner in which they acted as the common fathers of

[1] Letter 9. [2] Process, 1337.

Christendom, is truly wonderful; and it makes us understand Catherine's language in her letter to the King of France, which in a merely political view of the matter would otherwise seem a little hard.

She urges him to observe three things in the discharge of his royal office, and as one worthy of being called the Wise.[1] First, not to look on his kingdom as his own property, but as something lent to him, of which he only has the stewardship; secondly, to maintain justice, and to defend the rights of the poor; "and the third thing," she says,—"and this is the point which my soul most earnestly desires,—is that you live in love and charity with your neighbour[2] with whom you have so long been at war. Remember the example of our sweet Lord, how, when the Jews cried, 'Crucify Him!' He replied by the prayer, so full of meekness, 'Father, forgive them!' Follow His example; show that you have a care for the salvation of your neighbour; yes, my lord, do not trouble yourself about the loss of worldly possessions; such a loss will be a real gain to you, for it will enable you to make peace with your brother. For my own part I wonder that you are not ready to give your whole life to procure this end, considering the destruction of souls and bodies caused by this miserable war. Be sure that if you refuse to do what you can in this matter, you will be held as the cause of these evils. Alas, for Christians! and alas, for the infidels too! for it is your policy that has prevented and still prevents the holy war; and had it no other result than this, it seems to me we should fear the judgments of God."[3]

Charles might have replied with considerable show of reason that the policy she here complains of was nothing else than the patriotic endeavour to rid his country of foreign invaders; and Catherine would have answered by reminding him at what a cost. The cost of maintaining the contest was in fact the dissolution

[1] Charles V. was surnamed the Wise, and Catherine did not forget the circumstance. *Vi prego che come Savio, facciate come buono dispensatore.* (Letter 186.)

[2] *i.e.*, the King of England.

[3] Letter 186.

of Christendom, and its poisoned fruits were to be gathered in the centuries that followed. In the eyes of the saint the glory of a patriot king would have been surpassed by that of a champion of the Faith; and she urged him therefore, even at some sacrifice of national interests, to give peace to Europe, that so all the children of the Church might unite together to heal her wounds and check the onward march of the infidels. "Follow," she says, "the way and the doctrine of the Crucified Lamb. You will follow the way He trod if you bear injuries with patience, and you will follow His doctrine if you are reconciled with your neighbour. You will prove your love of God by helping forward the holy war. Your brother Messire the Duke of Anjou has resolved for the love of God to devote himself to this enterprise, and it would be a terrible thing if you were to hinder or prevent it."

Meanwhile the question of the Pope's return to Rome did not greatly advance. When Catherine came back from Villeneuve she found things much as she had left them. Gregory continued to declare that his determination had been taken, and that he was indeed about to depart; but there were no signs of actual preparation. He still hesitated, and desired to obtain through the prayers of the Saint some certain and unmistakable sign of the will of God; and for this purpose he one day sent her a message that she was to pray for him in a particular manner the next morning after Communion. She obeyed; and her prayer, uttered in ecstasy, was preserved and written down by Thomas Petra, the Pope's Notary, afterwards secretary to Urban VI., and one who formed an intimate friendship with the Saint during her stay at Avignon. It is printed first in the collection of her prayers, and concludes as follows:—"O Ineffable Deity! I am all sin, and unworthy to address Thee, but Thou canst make me worthy. O Lord, punish my sins, and regard not my miseries. I have one body, and to Thee I give it: behold my blood, behold my flesh; destroy it, annihilate it, separate it bone from bone for the sake of those for whom I pray. If it be Thy will, cause my bones and my very marrow to be ground to pieces for Thy Vicar on

earth, the bridegroom of Thy Spouse, for whom I pray; that Thou wilt deign to hear me, and that he, Thy Vicar, may both know Thy will, and love it, and perform it, to the end that we may not perish! Give him a new heart, that he may increase in grace, and raise the standard of the holy Cross, and make even the infidels to be sharers in the Passion and Blood of the Immaculate Lamb, Thy only Son our Lord! O Ineffable, Eternal Deity!—*Peccavi Domine, miserere mei!*"

Having ended this prayer she remained for some time in a state of abstraction, after which she again began to speak; the prayer she uttered being that which immediately follows the one above quoted. Her Pisan disciple, Thomas Buonconti, was present at the time, and carefully noted every circumstance; and in the original manuscript he has left a marginal note in his own handwriting to this effect: "Having finished these words, she remained as before,—silent, immovable, rigid and abstracted, with her arms crossed on her breast—for about an hour. After that we sprinkled her face with holy water, and frequently invoked the name of Jesus Christ, and in a little while she began again to draw breath, and said in a low voice, 'Praised be God, now and for ever!'"[1]

When Catherine returned to herself, she addressed two letters to Gregory, in both of which she refers to the command which he had given her to pray for him. "Holy Father," she says, "Brother Raymund brought me your command to pray to God, in case you should meet with obstacles. I did so after Communion, and I saw none of the perils and dangers of which your councillors speak." Then she declares to him, as from God, that the most certain sign he could receive of the Divine will was the opposition he was sure to encounter in carrying it out. But aware of the immense difficulties that beset him on the part of his own

[1] Buonconti collected other prayers made at Avignon, in the presence of twelve persons who heard the Saint in rapture holding converse with God. One of these prayers was spoken on the vigil of the Assumption, and he describes her state as "abstracted, unconscious, and rigid, so that it would have been easier to break her limbs than to bend them." See Gigli, Tom. iv., Pref. xv., xvi.

family, she advised him, if he had not the resolution to carry matters with a high hand, to have recourse to stratagem, and while seeming to leave his departure indefinitely deferred, to prepare for it in secret without loss of time. In fact, Gregory's naturally affectionate heart was suffering a martyrdom from the appeals made him by his nearest relatives and the necessity he was under of struggling against his own tenderness. One day having asked Catherine what she would really advise him to do in these difficult circumstances, she turned on him that penetrating look which had read the secrets of so many hearts, and replied, "Who knows what ought to be done better than your Holiness, who has long since made a vow to God to return to Rome?" Gregory started. He had indeed made such a vow long back, but had spoken of it to no living soul. He perceived that in very truth Catherine was possessed of powers given her by God; and recognising the sign of the Divine will which he had asked for, he at once gave orders for the necessary preparations for departure.[1]

Catherine would willingly now have taken her leave of the Court; her mission at Avignon was ended, and she was anxious to find herself once more at Siena, where her long absence was exciting many complaints. But Gregory felt the support of her presence far too necessary for him to consent to part with her, and it was agreed that she should leave Avignon on the same day,[2] as himself, though, as it would seem, not by the same route.

No further particulars have been left us of Catherine's residence in the Papal city, which lasted altogether four months, nor have her biographers enabled us to follow the track of her footsteps to any of the sanctuaries of the neighbourhood. Yet there can be no doubt of her having often visited the Dominican church, now crumbling to ruins, but then enjoying a certain renown as having

[1] This narrative is given in the deposition of F. Bartholomew Dominic (Process, 1325). The fact of Gregory having really taken such a vow is corroborated by Baluze (Vita Greg. XI., 949), and by Pius II. in the Bull of St. Catherine's canonisation.

[2] Process, 1337.

been recently the scene of the canonisation of St. Thomas. In this church, too, Catherine would have found the tomb of a distinguished fellow-citizen. Simon Memmi, the Sienese painter, had been summoned to Avignon by Benedict XII., to decorate some of the halls of the Papal palace; he died while still employed on these works; and he whose pencil had left in the church of Sta. Maria Novella those many scenes from the life of St. Dominic, which Catherine, during her residence at Florence, must daily have contemplated, found the fitting hospitality of a last resting-place among the Holy Father's white-robed children at Avignon. We need no assurance that Catherine prayed at that tomb, and that the name of the artist of her native city brought back grateful thoughts of home during these weary weeks of exile. At last the welcome day of departure arrived. Gregory, profiting by the Saint's advice, had caused his galleys to be secretly got ready,[1] and on the 13th of September 1376 he left the palace, intending to journey by land to Marseilles, and thence to embark for Rome. Up to the last moment the courtiers had refused to believe in the possibility of such a disaster; and the Pope's aged father had the desperate courage to try the effect of one last impassioned appeal. Throwing himself across the threshold of the palace gate, he there awaited a final interview with his son; and on his approach, raising a cry of bitter anguish, "How!" he exclaimed, "can my son so coldly forsake not only his country but even his old father! Well, then, before he departs, he shall pass over my body!" But at that supreme moment Gregory silenced in his own heart the cry of nature; and it was not Peter de Beaufort-Turenne, but the Vicar of Jesus Christ, who, as he passed the prostrate figure of the old man, spoke these solemn words as his only reply: *Super aspidem et basiliscum ambulabis: et conculcabis leonem et draconem* (Ps. xc. 13).

If Catherine heard them she must have given thanks to God who had put into the heart of His servant a courage the more sublime as it was wholly supernatural. We shall not follow the journey of the Pontiff and his reluctant attendants any further,

[1] Biondo, lib. ii., cap. x.

though it has been thought worthy to be made the subject of a grand historical poem; the author of which was no less a personage than Pierre Amely d'Alète, Bishop of Sinigaglia, and the Pope's almoner.[1] But turning our backs on the towers of Avignon we will accompany the little group of Italian pilgrims who set out the same day, taking the road, not to Marseilles but to the port of Toulon.

[1] This very curious production, which is not without its interest both historical and geographical, may be found in Ciaconius (Vitæ Pont. et Card., Tom. ii. p. 578).

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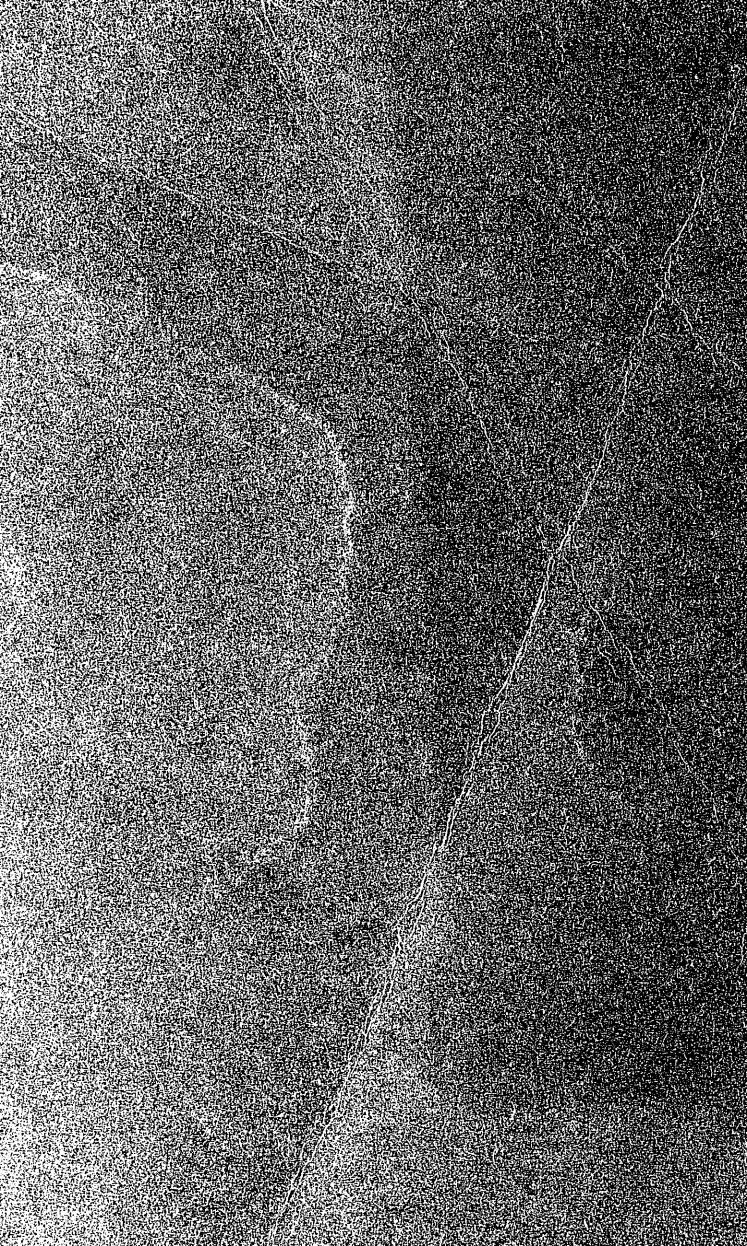

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THE HISTORY OF ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

AND HER COMPANIONS

WITH A TRANSLATION OF HER TREATISE ON CONSUMMATE PERFECTION

BY

AUGUSTA THEODOSIA DRANE

AUTHOR OF "CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS AND SCHOLARS," ETC.

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Part III

THE RETURN TO SIENA

ST. CATHERINE, AND THE COMPANY OF THE B. VIRGIN

CHAPTER I

The Homeward Journey

(Oct. 1376 to Jan. 1377.)

CATHERINE had received from the Pope a hundred florins for the expenses of her homeward journey, to which sum the Duke of Anjou added a hundred francs. Her motive for directing her course to Toulon rather than to Marseilles was to avoid coming in contact with the Papal cortège, and also because her own journey to Genoa was to be performed by land. She must unavoidably have passed in the near neighbourhood of *La*

Sainte Baume, and it is difficult to believe that she would not have turned aside to visit the sanctuary of her beloved patron and mother St. Mary Magdalen. If so, however, her biographers have neglected to record the fact, and it is at Toulon that we come on the first traces of the travellers. Having reached that city they stopped at an inn, and Catherine, according to her custom, retired at once to her apartment; she wished to observe the strictest privacy, and had charged her companions not to let it be known she was there. "But," says Raymund, "the very stones appeared to announce her arrival. First women, and then men, flocked to our residence, demanding to see the Saint who had come from the Pontifical Court. The landlord having admitted she was there, it became impossible to keep back the crowd, and we were forced to let the women enter. One of them brought an infant whose body was so swollen that it was piteous to behold, and some of those present asked Catherine to hold the child for a moment in her arms. At first she refused, desiring to shun the notice of men, but at last, overcome by compassion, she did as they asked her; and hardly was the infant placed in her arms than it was completely restored. I was not present when this occurred; but it was so well certified that the Bishop of the city sent for me, and relating what had happened, informed me that the child was nephew to his Vicar-General; and he requested me to obtain for him an interview with Catherine."

From Toulon it is generally agreed that she and her companions travelled to Genoa by land. Nevertheless we learn from a letter written by John of the Cells to William Flete that at one point their land journey suffered a temporary interruption. "A certain prelate," says Don John, "worthy of all credit, related to me as follows: 'I was at Nurcia the same day that Catherine went to the Pope, and such a multitude of men and women ran to receive her blessing, that to my knowledge the heavenly virgin rose by night, and, taking ship, fled from the tumult.'" On the whole sea-coast from Tuscany to Marseilles no place of this name occurs, unless indeed we identify it with Nice, which by the

Italians is called Nizza ;[1] but the mention of the Pope's presence there renders it almost certain that some town on the Gulf of Genoa is here intended; and a little experience in the fatality which accompanies the record of names will suffice to explain the fact that Nurcia finds no place in modern geography.

The road which Catherine followed must have been that known as the *Corniche* or *Cornice*, being the remains of the ancient Roman Emilian way. Running along the side of the rocks and in some places overhanging the sea, its dangers were increased by the torrents which rush down from the hills, sometimes rendering even the present coast-road difficult of transit. Its beauties at least equalled its dangers, each turn of that mountain path opening on some new bay or headland, while the waters of the Mediterranean would be seen breaking in jewelled spray on the rocks below. Then as now the eyes of the travellers would have been gladdened with the sight of orange and lemon groves, perfuming the air with their rich blossoms, and mingling their foliage with that of the olives and the stone pines; and at Bordighera Catherine would probably have found a welcome from the Brethren of her Order long established on that lovely spot, sometimes called "the Jericho of Italy" from the abundance of palm trees which still give so Oriental an aspect to the scenery, and which, with other features in the landscape, irresistibly awaken in the heart of the traveller memories of the Holy Land.[2]

[1] The theory of their identity has this difficulty. The accurate Bishop of Sinigaglia, in his Itinerary, informs us that the Pope's flotilla passed Nice on the 9th of October. Now on the 3rd of October St. Catherine had gone on to Voragine, and would certainly not have retraced her steps to Nice. (*Notale relative ad alcune visioni avute da Sta. Caterina nella terra di Voragine, ed altrove.* Cod. T. iii. 7 a, carte 295.)

[2] "The noble palm trees of Bordighera almost gird it round on the western and northern sides, and grow in profusion in coppices and woods, of all sizes, from the gnarled giants of one thousand years' reputed age to little suckers that may be pulled up by hand. There are probably now more palms in Bordighera alone than in the whole of the Holy Land" (*Dean Alford*). "The olives here tell us of Olivet and the garden; the lilies carry us to the Sermon on the Mount; the hillside tanks, waving streams, and water-brooks swollen by sudden rain, all speak to us of Palestine" (*J. A. Symonds*).

Continuing her journey, then, along this road (in the course of which one of her companions treacherously abandoned her, taking with him the money which she had given him for their expenses), she arrived on the 3rd of October at Voragine or Varezze, a town on the sea-coast, not far from Genoa. "Descried through groves of oranges and palm-trees," says a recent writer, "may still be seen the tower of the church where was probably baptized the Blessed James of Voragine," of the Order of Preachers, who in his day was Archbishop of Genoa, and author of that celebrated collection of Saints' Lives, known as the "Golden Legend." Catherine naturally felt an interest in a spot connected with that holy man, with whose book she was perfectly well acquainted. In fact, the "Golden Legend" was the most popular book of spiritual reading in the Middle Ages, and St. Catherine makes allusions to it in several of her letters. This visit to Voragine is not mentioned by Raymund in his Legend, although it was accompanied by some sufficiently remarkable circumstances. Bartholomew Dominic, however, speaks of it in his deposition; and certain notes regarding it have been preserved in manuscript in the Communal Library at Siena, from an authentic copy of which I will proceed to restore this missing page of St. Catherine's history.

"A certain Simon Mafei of Voragine, a man of credit, in a document written on parchment and dated in the year 1381, which agrees with others preserved in the Convent of St. Maria Annunciata of the Order of Preachers, declares, that in the year 1376 St. Catherine when returning from Avignon, whither she had gone to transact important affairs regarding the Holy Church with the Sovereign Pontiff, came into the parts of Voragine, that she might visit the country of the Blessed James, Archbishop of Genoa. She was accompanied by F. Raymund of Capua, her confessor, and she found the place, through the destruction caused by the plague, so utterly depopulated, that there remained only a very few people alive. The houses were all deserted, and the grass was growing even over the gates. It was with difficulty she could find any person to take her in and give her hospitality. At

last, passing through one street where now stands the hospital, she met, behind the house, a woman of the place, named Costa, who lodged her in her house, and related to her the cause of the depopulation of the said town. And she, horrified by the narrative, as well as by all she had seen in the neighbouring country, was moved by pity to make a special prayer for the people who survived, and for all the inhabitants of the place, recommending them to the Most Holy Trinity and to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Before she left the said town, she told the people who were yet to be found in it, that they must set about building a chapel in honour of the Most Holy Trinity, and that the place would never more be molested by the plague, and that whoever having the plague on him should bring it to the town, should also take it away. In the morning she took the road towards Genoa, in company with the said Raymund her confessor, and passed through another street which led to the Church of our Lady of the Annunciation (called now Our Lady of Graces), founded in the year 1189, which was then under the care of a certain hermit, but is now in the hands of the Friars Preachers; and being accompanied by a few peasants, when she had arrived within a short distance of the spot, she told them, as well as the said F. Raymund, that the town having had a man so illustrious as the Blessed James, their compatriot, they should build a convent for the brethren of the Order of Preachers, which was done many years afterwards by some persons devout to the Order, and among others by the aforesaid Simon Mafei. Then the Saint with her confessor entered into the church and prayed there; which ended, they took their leave, thanking all for the charity shown them; and giving them a blessing, they turned their steps towards the city of Genoa."

To this account we must append that of the most accurate of all the Saint's biographers, F. Bartholomew Dominic, who gives us these additional particulars in his deposition. "Having reached Voragine about the hour of Vespers," he says, "Catherine called F Raymund to her, and said to him, 'God has even now made known to me that, after some years have passed, you will on this

same day, the vigil of St. Francis, with your own hand transfer my body from one tomb to another.' Raymund repeated these words the same evening to Bartholomew, and the prediction was verified by the event. The promise made by the Saint to the unfortunate inhabitants of Voragine has also been fulfilled to the letter, down even to our own times; and that in a manner too remarkable to be passed without notice. The Commune of the town lost no time in carrying out her instructions. They erected a chapel in honour of the Holy Trinity, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Blessed James of Voragine; and after the canonisation of St. Catherine, they included her name also in the dedication. Never since that time has the plague visited the town, and its immunity from every kind of pestilence is a thing so generally known, that on various occasions, when other places in the neighbourhood have been suffering from this scourge, the inhabitants have taken refuge here; and by so doing have rendered the literal accomplishment of the Saint's words more evident: for coming hither with the infection on them, they have themselves died, but never communicated the disease to any of the citizens of Voragine; and instances of this extraordinary protection enjoyed by them are recorded in the year 1579, 1630, and 1706, and even in the more recent visitations of the cholera. The gratitude of the people to their great protectress is literally unbounded. By a decree of the Magistrates she was declared chief patroness of their city; a mass was ordered to be daily celebrated in her honour within the chapel already mentioned, and her feast is celebrated by processions and other extraordinary devotions, at which persons from all the surrounding districts are accustomed to attend. No inhabitant of Voragine would think of adopting any other means of preservation from pestilence, and they take a pride in showing themselves, above the inhabitants of any other place, her true and loyal clients." (*Relaz. del Passagio di. S. Cath. in Voragine, MS. Siena.*)

On leaving Voragine the little party pursued their way to Genoa, where they were charitably entertained for more than a month in the house of a noble lady named Orietta Scotta.

Caffarini calls her "a devout and noble matron." Her family was in fact one of the most illustrious of the land, and is thought to have been Scottish in origin, and to have first settled in Italy in the time of Charlemagne. The two brothers Amico and Gabriel, sons of William Scott, came to Genoa in 1120, and were given the command of the Genoese troops. From Baldwin, son of Amico, descended Barnabo, the husband of our Saint's hostess. The Scotti afterwards assumed the name and arms of the Centurioni, but they were so proud of the connection of their ancestress with St. Catherine, that the name of Orietta was carefully perpetuated in the family. One letter addressed by the Saint to this lady is printed in the collection of her epistles (No. 334). The original of this letter was preserved by the Centurioni for 300 years as a most precious relic, but it was unfortunately lost in the last century, passing with other valuable property into the possession of another family.

Orietta's house was in the Via Caneto, leading to San Giorgio, and to a very ancient Dominican convent. The letter above spoken of is addressed to "Madonna Orietta Scotta, *at the Cross of Caneto*," so called because at this particular spot the streets cross. This house was preserved in Burlamacchi's time, though it had then passed into the hands of certain merchants; and in it was still to be seen St. Catherine's room, converted into a chapel.

Raymund informs us in his Legend that having reached Genoa some days before Gregory, "Catherine stopped there in order to wait for him." These words imply, but do not actually inform us, that they met again at Genoa; but the interesting fact has been carefully recorded by Caffarini in his Supplement. He gives it on the authority of F. Severino of Savona, who related to him how Gregory, being much fatigued by his disastrous sea-voyage, stopped some days at Genoa to rest. How disastrous the voyage had been the Itinerary of Peter d'Amely informs us. Not to speak of the abundant tears shed by all on quitting France, we learn that they were once forced to land on a desert and inhospitable shore to escape the violence of the tempest. On the

feast of St. Francis they encountered another storm, and narrowly escaped shipwreck. Peter expresses himself as perfectly astonished at the inhospitable fury of the elements, but at last hits on the happy explanation that it must have been caused by the wickedness of those Romans, to whom the excellent Pontiff was being so barbarously transported.

They at length reached Genoa on the 18th of October, and remained there ten days. During this time the most discouraging rumours reached them from Rome, where the popular leaders, who had possessed themselves of the chief authority in the absence of the Pope, by no means pleased at the prospect of having to resign their power, were stirring up the people to insurrection. Florence, too, was reported to be on the verge of some desperate measures, and the French courtiers failed not to seize the opportunity of representing to Gregory the madness of the enterprise he had undertaken, and to urge him, while there was yet time, to bend back his steps to the more hospitable shores of France. The question of a retreat to Avignon was even debated in Consistory; when learning that Catherine was in Genoa, Gregory resolved to seek an interview with her, for the purpose, as it would seem, of confirming his wavering resolution.

He went, therefore, by night to the residence of Orietta. There were two reasons for this singular arrangement. In the first place, the Pope was unwilling to summon Catherine to come to him, lest he might thereby arouse the watchful jealousy of those who surrounded him; whilst it was equally impossible for him to repair to her house in the daytime without exciting public notice: for, from the dawn of day until the evening, a countless multitude of persons of all ranks flocked to see and consult her, in such sort that she was not left free for a moment. It did not appear suitable to Gregory's dignity to appear in the midst of the crowd, nor did he think it prudent to summon her to his presence, desiring that their interview should be unknown to the members of his suite. He went therefore to her house as a private individual, at an hour when she was less beset by visitors. On seeing

the Sovereign Pontiff enter her chamber, Catherine humbly prostrated at his feet. He at once raised her and spoke to her with much affection and kindness; and after a long conference, begged her to grant him one favour before he departed: it was that she would remember him every day in her prayers. It need hardly be said that she promised to obey his wishes, adding with simplicity and filial confidence, that she trusted he would also not forget her when he offered the Holy Sacrifice. At last they separated, and Gregory withdrew, much edified, after giving her his benediction.[1]

Caffarini, in his narrative of this interesting incident, has dropped no hint that the courage of the Pontiff stood in need of reinforcement, or that Catherine employed her influence with him to counteract that of his courtiers. Nevertheless, the fact is preserved in a note affixed to the third of her Prayers, which runs as follows: "*This Prayer was made at Genoa by the said virgin, to dissuade Pope Gregory from the project of returning back: things contrary to the journey to Rome having been deliberated on in the Consistory.*" The prayer itself reveals the circumstances that inspired it; possibly the words flowed from her lips that same night during the anxious hours which elapsed after Gregory had quitted her. "O Eternal God!" she exclaims, "permit not that Thy Vicar should yield to the counsels of the flesh, nor judge according to the senses and self-love, nor that he suffer himself to be terrified by any opposition. O Immortal Love! if Thou art offended by his hesitations and delays, punish them on my body which I offer to thee to be tormented and destroyed according to Thy will and pleasure!" Her supplications prevailed. On the 28th of October, Gregory left Genoa and directed his course towards Leghorn. There was no more talk of a retreat; and thus for the second time had Catherine infused her own strength into his heart, and braced him for his noble purpose. She was herself detained at Genoa for more than a month in consequence of sickness breaking out among her companions. The first who fell ill was Neri di Landoccio, and the pain he suffered was so

[1] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 1, § 1.

intense, that unable either to lie in bed or stand upright, he crawled about the room on his hands and knees. Catherine, compassionating his state, desired that a physician should be sent for, and Raymund accordingly summoned two skilful leeches to prescribe for the sick man; but their prescription had no beneficial effect. "They told me plainly," he says, "that they had no hopes of saving the patient. When I announced this sad news to the others who were at table with me, Stephen Maconi rose at once, full of sorrow, and hastened to Catherine's room. Throwing himself at her feet, he begged her with tears not to suffer his brother and companion, who had undertaken this journey for God's sake and hers, to die far from his home, and to be buried in a strange land. Catherine, much moved, said to him with a mother's tenderness, 'My son, why are you thus troubled? If God wishes now to crown your brother Neri's labours, you ought rather to rejoice than to mourn.' But Stephen persisted in his prayer. 'Oh, sweetest, dearest Mother,' he said, 'I conjure you to help him, for I know well enough that you can, if only you will.' Then Catherine, unable to resist his appeal and the movements of her own tender heart, replied: 'I only wished to see you resigned to the will of God; but since you will have it so, remind me of your request before I receive Communion at Mass to-morrow, and I promise to pray to God for him; and you, too, must pray that I may be heard.' Full of joy at having obtained this promise, Stephen failed not to present himself to Catherine the next day as she was going to Mass, and kneeling humbly, he said, 'Mother, do not disappoint me.' She gave him a look of comfort, and passed on to the chapel; and having communicated, remained a long time in ecstasy. At last she returned from her abstraction, and observing Stephen who knelt by her side, she gave him a comforting smile, and whispered, 'You have obtained your grace.' 'What, Mother?' said Stephen; 'will Neri be cured?' 'Yes,' she replied, 'God will assuredly restore him to us.' At these words Stephen hastened to his friend with the good news, and soon afterwards the physicians arrived, and having questioned the patient, began to comment on his

wonderful improvement, and to say that though they had given him up the day before, they believed now that he would recover. And so, indeed, he did, and before long was perfectly restored."

Stephen himself was the next to fall ill, worn-out with the sorrow he had gone through, and the fatigue of nursing the others. Every one had warned him that without care he would certainly be ill; and so it came to pass. "He kept his bed," says Raymund, "and we did our best to assist and console him, for he was universally beloved." Catherine hearing of his state came to see him, accompanied by her confessor and companions. "She asked me," says Stephen, "what I was suffering, and I, delighted at her sweet presence, answered cheerfully, 'They tell me that I am suffering, but I know not what.' Then with maternal tenderness she laid her hand on my forehead, and said, shaking her head a little, 'Do you hear what that child says? "They tell me that I suffer, but I know not what," and all the time he has a violent fever.' Then turning to me, she added, 'I will not allow you to follow the example of the others, but I command you in virtue of holy obedience no longer to have this sickness. I will have you completely restored, so that you may serve your companions as before.' Then she began to speak of God, as was her custom, and while she conversed, I found myself perfectly cured. I interrupted her discourse to declare my recovery to all who stood by, who were lost in wonder; and since that time I have enjoyed long years of perfect health. Catherine spoke in the same tone of authority when she cured the venerable John of Vallombrosa, as he affirmed to me when he was in his last agony, at the Abbey of Passignano, near Siena. I heard from the very lips of Catherine a similar order given, in the absence of the same monk, to two of his disciples whom he had sent to her. She commanded him through them to be sick no longer, and to come to her without delay, which he did immediately. The holy religious wrote an admirable letter on this occasion, which I carefully preserve in our convent."[1]

The long delay, caused by the sickness of so many of the party,

[1] Letter of Stephen Maconi, forming part of the Process.

was meanwhile exciting great complaints on the part of those who awaited their return to Siena. Lapa, in particular, bitterly complained, and seems to have written to her daughter in a tone of fretful reproach, to which Catherine replied with her usual sweetness and moderation: "My dearest mother in our sweet Jesus" (so she writes), "I, your miserable and unworthy daughter Catherine, desire to comfort you in the Precious Blood of the Son of God. I wish to see you not only the mother of my body, but also of my soul, so that loving my soul more than my body, all inordinate tenderness may die in you, and then you will not suffer so much for the loss of my bodily presence, but be ready for God's honour to endure something, seeing that what I am doing is for His glory. . . . You know that it was His will that I should go, and I am sure you wish me to do His will. . . . So, like a good and sweet mother, you must be content, and not be so disconsolate. Remember how you acted when your children left you on account of temporal affairs, and now when it is a question of eternal life, you say you shall certainly die if I do not soon return. All this comes because you love that part of me which I owe to you (my body) better than the part I received from God. Raise your heart a little to the most sweet and holy Cross, and you will find it assuage every pain. Consent to endure a little passing suffering to avoid the endless punishment which we deserve for our sins. Strengthen yourself in the love of our crucified Jesus, and do not think that you will ever be abandoned either by God or by me. You will presently be consoled, and then the joy will be greater than the pain. We shall soon return, please God; and should have been back before this, had it not been for the serious illness of Neri; Master John and Brother Bartholomew have also been ill. Adieu." (Letter 169.)

But it was not her own mother alone who waxed impatient at the delay. Catherine had to appease the discontent, not unmingled with jealousy, of a more important personage. This was Donna Giovanna di Corrado Maconi, the mother of Stephen. She had parted with her son, and reluctantly sanctioned his forming one of the company who went to Avignon, but she began to

be uneasy as month passed after month, and still his return was deferred. Catherine wrote her a letter, in which she exhorted her to use her wealth as a steward of Christ, and to devote herself to the charge of bringing up her children; mindful that they, no less than her worldly possessions, were lent to her by Him, and must be given to His service. "Make the sacrifice of yourself and of your children to God," she says, "and if you see that God calls them, do not resist His sweet will. If He takes them from you with one hand, do you give them to Him with *two*, like a good and true mother who loves their salvation. Do not choose their state in life *for them;* mothers in the world sometimes say, 'I wish my children to please God, and I think they will serve Him as well in the world as in any other state;' but how often it happens that such poor mothers, by insisting on giving their children to the world, keep them neither for the world nor for God." She concludes her beautiful letter (No. 355) as follows: "Take courage, and have patience, and do not be troubled because I have kept your Stephen so long: I have taken good care of him and watched over him well, for the affection between us makes of us two but one and the same thing, and your interests, as you know, are mine. You, his mother, gave him birth once, and I also desire to give to him, and you, and all your family, a spiritual birth, in tears and anguish, offering my prayers to God without ceasing for your salvation and that of all your family. I will say no more; remember me to Corrado, and bless for me all your family, specially my new little plant, just planted in the garden of the Church.[1] Take good care of her, and bring her up in all virtue, that she may shed forth perfume among the other flowers. May God keep you in His holy grace! Adieu."

During their stay at Genoa, Catherine effected much for the salvation of souls. Caffarini, in the chapter of his Supplement already quoted, gives some interesting particulars, communicated to him by Fra Severino, the eye-witness of all he relates. "Fra Severino," he says, "told me that during the long stay which Catherine made at Genoa, many men of letters, doctors, and

[1] A new-born daughter.

masters in theology came to discourse with her. All who heard her with admiration and respect were visibly favoured by God; but, on the contrary, the proud who contemned and sought to discredit her were severely punished. Among other examples we may name that of a certain doctor of great reputation and eloquence, but of no less presumption and vanity. He audaciously sneered at Catherine, and spoke with contempt of her profound wisdom. But he did not go long without punishment, for the Divine vengeance struck him with a sudden and terrible death. In the same city of Genoa, professors of letters, sacred and profane, lawyers, the chief senators, and other persons of authority and credit were not ashamed to ask and receive her wise counsels. It was observed that all who spoke with her quitted her agitated, and full of a certain kind of terror, as though something extraordinary had happened to them. She exhorted all to penance with much sweetness, and attracted their esteem by the holiness of her life."

Genoa long retained the memory of St. Catherine's visit, and cherished the traces of her presence with jealous care. The Ligurian Academy, addressing its congratulations to Jerome Gigli on his publication of her works in 1707, dwells with pardonable pride on the fact, that next to Siena and Rome no city is richer in its associations with her name. "The streets she went through, the places where she lived, the apartments she occupied, may still be distinctly pointed out. From Capo di Monte towards the east is seen the ancient and solitary monastery of St. Fruttuoso, which gave her shelter both on her way from Tuscany to Avignon and on her return. Towards the west lies the town of Voragine, which she visited. The rural district that leads to the Croce di Caneto was more than any other sanctified by her footsteps. The house of Orietta Scotta still belongs to the descendants of that lady, and in it is the very chamber chosen by the Saint as her place of retirement and prayer."[1]

After remaining at Genoa rather more than a month, the travellers once more took ship and sailed for the coast of

[1] *Vocabolario Cateriniano*, p. 395.

Tuscany. Their passage was not unattended with danger, if the circumstances briefly related in the deposition of Peter Ventura belong to this time. "It chanced once," he says, "when the Saint was travelling by sea, that she was overtaken by a violent tempest, so that the vessel in which she was suffered shipwreck and was broken to pieces, but she happily reached the shore safe and sound with all her companions." It would have been more satisfactory to have had fuller details regarding this adventure, but the biographers of the Saint too often observe the rule of retrenching from their narrative the names of places, and persons, and the dates of time. We know of no other occasion when Catherine was exposed to the perils of the sea except her short trip to Gorgona, which was certainly attended by no such disaster to her and her party; though it is barely possible that an incorrect report of the accident which happened to her escort on their return to the island may have furnished ground for the above narrative. Certain it is, that neither Raymund nor any of the other companions of the Saint on the voyage from Genoa have alluded to the shipwreck, though Raymund in his Legend lets us know that they were in real peril. He tells the story, however, more by way of illustrating Catherine's confidence in God, than with any view of describing the incidents of their journey. He does not even inform us in so many words that the circumstances of which he speaks happened at this particular time, though we know it must have been so, this being the only sea-voyage in which he was her companion. "I remember," he says,[1] "that being on board of a ship with her and many other persons, the wind lowered into a dead calm towards midnight, and the pilot became extremely anxious: we were in a dangerous channel; if the wind had taken us sideways, we might have been thrown on some neighbouring islands or floated into the open sea. I gave notice to Catherine of our danger. She answered in her ordinary tone: 'Why does that trouble you, what have you to do of yourselves?' This was her ordinary expression in time of trouble. She considered that a soul which has fixed its thoughts on God should allow no

[1] Legend, Part I, ch. ix.

anxiety or distraction to cause it disquiet (for God knows all, and can do all, and He will watch and provide for the necessities of such as meditate on Him.) Hence, whenever we entertained any fear for ourselves or our brethren, she would often say, 'What have you to do of yourselves? let God act. His eye is over you; and He will protect you.' When, therefore, I heard her say these words, I took comfort and was somewhat reassured; but presently the wind changed, and blew in the direction dreaded by the pilot. I mentioned it to Catherine: 'Let him change the helm, in the name of God,' she said, 'and follow the wind that Heaven shall send him.' The pilot obeyed, while she, meantime, bowed down her head and made her prayer to God. And we had not kept on that course so far as a man would shoot an arrow, but that there came a gracious wind that brought us to the haven that we desired, where we arrived to our great wonder and gladness about the hour of Matins, singing all, with a joyful voice, *Te Deum laudamus.*"[1] This "desired haven" was the Port of Leghorn, where they once more set foot on the dear old soil of Tuscany, and where they were met by Lapa, her impatience to embrace her beloved child not suffering her to await her coming to Siena; for, before returning thither, Catherine was to pay a short visit to Pisa. Stephen's joy was a little damped on finding that an arrangement had been made on his behalf, in virtue of which he was to precede the rest of the party, and travel with one companion to Siena, charged with sundry letters and commissions, and feeling not unlike a truant schoolboy to whom the unwelcome hour has come for returning home.[2]

[1] In the above passage two paragraphs have been transposed for the sake of clearness, and a few of the picturesque phrases adopted which occur in Father Fen's translation, though his narrative as a whole is less intelligible than the original Legend.

[2] These details, not given in any of the Lives of St. Catherine hitherto published, are not imaginary; they are furnished by the very interesting collection of "Letters of St. Catherine's Disciples," preserved in MS. at Siena, and published by Signor Grottanelli in 1868, at the end of the *Leggenda Minore*. From them we learn the fact of the Saint's second visit to Pisa which has hitherto been overlooked.

He lost no time in reporting himself on his arrival at Siena, and consoled himself for the separation by despatching a grumbling sort of epistle to Neri, written half in jest and half in earnest. It is dated from Siena, Nov. 29th, 1376, and runs as follows :—

"DEAREST BROTHER,—You must know that last Friday we reached Siena safe and sound, though we had many alarms on the road, for the route we took by Peccioli is very dangerous by reason of bandits, and all kinds of wicked things are being committed there just now, which had I known I should never have come that way. But it is manifest that the prayers of our dearest Mother have had much to do both with our journey and our safe arrival here. I have given Sano the letters and the other things you sent, and all the sons and daughters of our dearest Mother have had the greatest consolation from them; and they are now impatiently awaiting your return, and I with them, for it seems to me that you delay much too long. Do beg all you can that your return may be soon, otherwise I shall repent having come back, and shall perhaps make up my mind to be the bearer of this letter myself. I will say no more at present, only asking you to salute our dearest Mother for me, and to recommend me to F. Raymund, F. Maestro, F. Thomas, F. Bartholomew, and Fra. Felice; embrace Monna Lapa, and recommend me to my mothers, Monna Cecca, Monna Alessia, and Monna Lisa, begging them to pray for poor miserable me. God knows what I should do with myself, if the hope of the time being short did not keep me up.

"To Neri Landoccio at the Dominican Convent of Sta. Caterina, in Pisa."

His next letter is dated the 8th of December, and from it we find he had written two others which are not preserved. Stephen was certainly a famous correspondent, and as much disposed to rattle in a charming kind of way with his pen as with his tongue. He informs Neri that these two letters (which seem to have miscarried) were pretty long, yet nothing at all in comparison of what he would like to have written. "I do beg of you," he says, "by

the sincere love I bear you, and which I know you return, reply as soon as you can and tell me how matters stand; whether they are accomplished or about to be accomplished; you can easily write in such a way as that no one but myself will understand. Recommend me to our dearest Mother a thousand times and more, tell her that at last I have obeyed her injunctions in the matter of the *ridotto*.[1] Recommend me to all the good ladies one by one, and tell Monna Alessia that her pretty little cell is waiting for her; and remember me in a special way to Monna Lapa. Also to my fathers, Master John and F. Raymund, and the others, each of them, one by one; and beg of them to have compassion on us poor disconsolate wretches, and to make haste home; and tell them all to pray for wicked me."

We have nothing to show what the business was which took Catherine to Pisa at this time, but it must be remembered that the affairs of Florence were as yet by no means settled, and she was doubtless anxious to secure the fidelity of Pisa and the adherence of Peter Gambacorta to the cause of the Church. In fact, the influence of Florence was so powerful over the other Tuscan republics that though far from desirous of quarrelling with the Pope, both Pisa and Lucca had involved themselves in difficulties, in consequence of their keeping up a friendly intercourse with the rebellious city which lay under the interdict. When Gregory stopped at Leghorn on his way to Corneto, ambassadors from Pisa and Lucca came to meet him bearing magnificent presents, including ample provision of veal, lamb, comfits, new bread, and Greek wine. Pierre d'Amely records the fact, and at the same time reveals the lurking distrust felt by the Pontiff and his court of these fair professions. "Beware, O Pontiff!" he says, "be not seduced by their flattering words! If they had not abjured their fidelity to the Church, would they not have come with their armies to have delivered thee from the Florentines? Yet instead of that, they have contracted an alliance with the guilty city!" We must not, however, judge this conduct too harshly. It was

[1] Grottanelli explains in a note that in Siena this word is applied to the entrance-hall of a house; but it appears to have many meanings.

an embarrassing position for the less powerful Tuscan cities, who had to choose their line of conduct between the cross-fire of a double danger. If they took an open part against Florence, she was strong enough to extinguish their independence; and if they kept on terms with her, they ran the risk of being included in the censures of the Church, which were directed against her and all who should take any part in her misdeeds. Questions connected with these circumstances were doubtless the cause of Catherine's journey to Pisa at the present time. They must indeed have been pressing affairs that could prolong her absence from Siena, which had already lasted eight months. Her return took place towards the end of December, or the beginning of January, when she once more found herself in her old home of the Fullonica. How fair must its humble walls have appeared to her after the gaudy splendour of Avignon! Who can doubt that Stephen was waiting there to welcome them home, to exhibit the *ridotto* and Monna Alessia's charming little cell, and everything on which he had expended his superfluous energies during that weary month of suspense? But all this must be left to our imagination, for no traces of such scenes have been preserved by Catherine's biographers. Whatever may have been the joys of that happy moment of reunion, they did not prevent Catherine from following in her heart the progress of Gregory towards his capital. He was then at Corneto, where he arrived on the 5th of December, and before departing for Rome on the 13th of January,[1] Catherine addressed him a letter which reads like a mother's last charge to her son before sending him forth to some glorious and difficult enterprise.

After reminding him that no man can be the servant of God unless he be firm, constant, and patient, and that sensuality and love of ease deprive the soul of constancy, and render our hearts narrow and pusillanimous, she continues thus:

"O most holy Father, and my own sweet Father, open the eye of your understanding, and you will see that if virtue is needed

[1] This date enables us to fix that of Catherine's return to Siena; for, as will be seen, her letter to him was written from her own city, and addressed to him while still at Corneto.

by every man in order that he may save his soul, it is doubly needed by you, who have to feed and govern the mystical body of the Church, which is your Spouse. What need you have of constancy, of fortitude, and of patience! Remember you were still young when you were planted in the garden of the Church, and you have to combat against our threefold enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil. I trust in God's goodness you will resist them all, and fulfil the end for which God created you, namely, to render honour and glory to His Holy Name, and enjoy His goodness hereafter in the beatific vision. Now that you are the Vicar of Christ, who has chosen you to labour for His honour, for the salvation of souls, and for the reform of Holy Church, labours and sufferings are specially destined for you, over and above the ordinary combats which all souls must undergo who would serve God.

"The heavier is your burden, the stronger and more courageous should be your heart, fearless of all that may chance to befall you. You know that in taking the Church to be your Spouse, you pledged yourself to suffer for her sake all contradictions and tribulations. Well, then, go forward, like a brave man, and meet the tempest with strength, patience, and perseverance. Never let suffering make you look back through fear or surprise; but press on and rejoice in the midst of perils and battles, because through all these things you will see the work of God accomplished. It is ever so: the persecutions of the Church, like the tribulations of the just soul, always end in peace, purchased and merited by patience and perseverance, for which is reserved the crown of everlasting glory. I desire then to see your heart firm and unshaken, protected by holy patience: then you will find in suffering peace and consolation, and by suffering out of love for Jesus crucified, you will see this great war end in a great peace.

"Yes, peace, peace, Holy Father! Be pleased to receive back your children who have offended you; your goodness will conquer their malice and pride. It is no shame to stoop in order to raise a repentant child, but rather a thing glorious before God and man. No more war then, Holy Father, but give us peace,

and turn the war upon the infidels. My soul desires nothing more in this life save God's honour, your peace, the reform of the Church, and the life of grace for every living soul. Courage then; as far as I can judge, the general disposition is to regard you as a father, specially in this poor little city which has always been the cherished daughter of your Holiness, though circumstances have forced her citizens to do some things that have displeased you. They see now that they acted under constraint, and your Holiness will do well to excuse them; for you may easily draw them with the bait of love. And now I entreat you, go as speedily as possible to the city of the holy Apostles. Go forward in full trust that God on His part will give all that is necessary for you, and for the Church your Spouse. Only have courage, and reckon confidently on the prayers of all true servants of God, and, together with all your other children, I humbly ask your benediction."[1]

Catherine had hardly re-established herself in Siena before messengers arrived from Florence, urging her return to that city, in order that she might make one more effort in the cause of peace. These messengers were Nicolas Soderini, Peter Canigiani, and Bindo Altovito, brave and loyal men, who desired nothing but the good of their country and reconciliation with the Church. Catherine's strong good sense, however, led her to decline their invitation. She saw clearly enough that Florence in the seething effervescence of revolution was no place for a woman. Yet, as it was necessary to communicate to the Magistrates the result of her mission to Avignon, she resolved to send Stephen Maconi back with the three envoys, that he might act in her name. They left Siena, therefore, in the April or May of 1377, and proceeded to lay before the Magistrates of Florence the terms proposed by his Holiness, and to urge their compliance. Stephen used his utmost eloquence in support of peace, but entirely without success. His arguments, instead of convincing his hearers, only irritated them the more. A rumour was spread through the city that one of the "be-Catherined fools of Siena" had been sent,

[1] Letter 11.

by his "blessed Catherine," to try and wheedle the Eight of War into surrendering the republic to the court of Rome; and the result was such a tumult that Stephen had to return to Siena with precipitation in order to save his head.

So for the present there was no hope of peace; and Catherine, seeing the fruitlessness of her efforts in that direction, applied her whole attention to affairs nearer home.

CHAPTER II

Belcaro, 1377

FROM the course of our history it will have been seen that Catherine took no part in the solemn entrance of Gregory XI. into the holy city, which took place on the 17th of January 1377. In the great picture of the Sala Regia at the Vatican, and again on the bas-relief which adorns the Pontiff's tomb in the Church of Santa Francesco Romana, she appears walking beside his horse as he rides through the streets in triumphant procession; a representation as false historically, as it is true in a symbolical sense. Yet in her little chamber in the Fullonica, she listened with a glad heart to the tidings, that his galleys had at last ascended the Tiber from Ostia to Rome; that his feet had first touched the sacred soil at the Basilica of St. Paul; and that from thence he had ridden to St. Peter's amidst demonstrations of welcome that seem fairly to have taken him and his attendants by surprise. The people preceded him not merely shouting, but dancing for joy; the senators and nobles appeared clad in such gorgeous silken vestments, that even the Avignon courtiers admitted they had never seen the like; while women mounted to the roofs of the houses to get a better view of the scene, and more conveniently to throw down sweetmeats and winter flowers on the procession. They did not reach St. Peter's until evening, and found the whole Piazza illuminated with torches, and the church blazing with 800 lamps. Whatever doubts had been raised as to the welcome which Rome would bestow upon her Pontiff were set at rest that day. "The people," says Peter d'Amely, "were delirious with joy; never in my life did I witness such extravagant transports."

In the meantime Catherine had found one great anxiety awaiting her. Her native city that she loved so well, and that up to this time had adhered so faithfully to the cause of Gregory, had through its close alliance with Florence got involved in the interdict. In fact, the case of Siena was one of peculiar difficulty, for during the quarrel between her nobles and citizens, the intervention of the Florentines had restored peace to the republic; and hence the obligations of the Sienese to their powerful neighbour were both great and recent. However, though bound to Florence by ties of gratitude, they had no wish to break with the Pope; and the question of despatching an embassy to Rome in order to arrange terms of reconciliation was already under discussion. Catherine approved of this proposal, and addressed a letter to Gregory, which she sent by the hands of the ambassadors,[1] supporting the petition of her countrymen. After again urging him to make peace at any cost, and so to cast coals of fire on the heads of his revolted children, she continues, "You know, Holy Father, that all reasonable creatures are more easily led by love and goodness than by any other means, and this is particularly true of us Italians of these parts (*Specialmente questi nostri Italiani di quà*). . . . The ambassadors of Siena are about to present themselves to your Holiness; there are no people in the world more easily won by kindness, and I conjure you to make use of that bait to catch them. Be so indulgent as to listen to the excuses they will offer for their fault; they repent of it, but know not what to do. Be pleased then, Holy Father, to inform them what course they must take which will be most agreeable to you, without obliging them to go to war with those to whom they are bound. . . . I humbly ask your blessing, and would recommend to you the ambassadors of Siena."

Tommasi in his history tells us that "Gregory received the ambassadors with much kindness, for the sake of Sister Catherine

[1] Much difference of opinion exists as to who these ambassadors were. One was certainly Andrea Piccolomini, and, according to the Aldine edition of St. Catherine's letters, another was Thomas Guelfaccio, her own di e, and the convert of St. John Colombini.

Benincasa, who had sent him a letter by them." The exact object of the embassy was twofold: to make their own submission to the Pope, and to get released from censures; and also to obtain the restitution of certain important fortresses of which they had been deprived.[1] If any traveller of classical predilections should chance to journey from Leghorn to Cività Vecchia by the line of railway which runs along the desolate coast of the Tuscan Maremma, and stopping on his way at the Talamon station, should observe some barren rocks covered with ruins, he may be roused to a momentary interest by being reminded that they mark the site of the ancient Telamon, where Marius landed on his return from Africa, and where Lucius Emilius defeated the Gauls. But the votary of St. Catherine, if hitherwards journeying, will examine those rocks with a keener curiosity. Whether she ever visited the spot in person we cannot tell, but it occupied a good many of her thoughts at the particular time of which we are speaking. Talamon is a town of the Maremma district, which in old time belonged to a Benedictine Abbey, but in 1303 was sold to the republic of Siena. The fortified rock formed an important frontier stronghold, and we have seen its possession demanded in 1368 by the Emperor Charles IV., who was well aware of its strategical value. In 1375 it was seized by one of the Priors of the order of St. John, commonly called "the Prior of Pisa." He was a certain Messer Nicolas or Priam (as he is called, by the Pisan chronicler Tronci), to whom Catherine had some time before written a very stirring letter, which we have already quoted, moving him to join the Crusade. His seizure of Talamon was an unwarrantable act of injustice, but having seized it, he held, or professed to hold, it for the Church, and Peter Gambacorta, to whose family he was related, seems to have favoured the transaction on the ground that Talamon had formerly been Pisan territory. The ambassadors, therefore, were instructed to demand the restoration of Talamon, and Catherine took a particular interest in the success of their application. From what cause does not appear, but in spite of the good recep-

[1] See Part 1, chap. xvi., p. 205.

tion given them by Gregory, no success attended their mission. Probably more active measures against Florence were demanded of them as a condition of their pardon than they dared agree to; and they returned to Siena without having obtained either the removal of the interdict, or the restitution of the fortress, the recovery of which was at last due, as we shall hereafter see, to the exertions of St. Catherine.

Meanwhile she was engaged in a rather important undertaking of a more private character. The reader, we hope, has not forgotten Master Nanni di Ser Vanni, who had by her means been induced to make peace with his enemies, and who, in token of gratitude, had made over to her his castle of Belcaro, to be converted by her into a convent. The various journeys in which she had for the last two years been engaged had deferred the accomplishment of this purpose, though in many of her letters allusions occur which show that the proposed plan was not forgotten. To carry it out, however, two authorisations were required; one for the foundation of the convent from the Sovereign Pontiff, and another from the Magistrates of Siena to sanction the dismantling, or rather decastellating, of one of the fortresses of the republic. Gregory had given the Saint his sanction to the foundation during the time of her stay at Avignon; and the Bull to that effect was preserved with some other privileges granted her by the Pontiff in the convent of SS. John and Paul at Venice, where it was seen by Caffarini, as he tells us in his deposition. But there existed in Siena a statute forbidding the alienation of strong places without the consent of the Magistrates. Catherine, therefore, had to present her petition to the Magnificent Lords Defenders of the Republic, and the document is still preserved in the State Archives, and bears date January 25th, 1376, that is, in our style 1377.[1] In it "Catherine, the daughter of Monna Lapa of the Contrada of Fontebranda," declares to the Magnificent Lords that Nanni di Ser Vanni, knowing how the said Catherine desired, for her soul's

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The new monastery was therefore begun, and though we have no particulars left us regarding the subsequent establishment of the Community, yet it is quite certain from various notices in the Legend, in St. Catherine's letters, and in the depositions of more than one witness in the Process, that Catherine occupied herself seriously in its establishment, and that it was the scene of several interesting incidents of her life.

Belcaro became a real fortress once more in 1554 when, during the siege of Siena by Cosmo I., it was occupied by troops, and still exhibits cannon-balls embedded in its walls. After that it became the property of Crescenzio Turamini, a rich banker of Siena, who turned it into a magnificent villa which he caused to be decorated in fresco by Baldassare Peruzzi. It no longer, therefore, presents the same aspect as in St. Catherine's time, yet the site is unchanged, and much of the original castellated edifice is still left standing. Situated about three miles north-west of the city and approached by charming country lanes, it occupies a little hill which, as you draw near, has the appearance of a green mound with a tower just peeping out of the centre. "The hill," says a modern traveller, "is entirely covered with ancient ilexes, which are shorn at the top so as to give the appearance of a level

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Siena, a Franciscan friar, one of the witnesses in the Process. Francesco declared to him that as he was saying Mass in the castle of Belcaro, he saw the holy virgin raised from the ground in ecstasy, so that between the ground and the border of her garments there was a free space of some distance, to the great wonder of those who saw it. "On this account," says F. Angelo, "I began from that time manfully to resist the detractors of the holy virgin, and to commend myself devoutly to her prayers." Many years later he related what he had heard from F. Francesco to Stephen Maconi, then a Carthusian monk. Stephen listened to him with a smile, and said that the same thing had been witnessed by himself and others, not once merely, but oftener than he could attempt to say.

It was from Belcaro, and some time early in 1377, that Catherine addressed another letter to Gregory, which is remarkable for its unusual tone of sadness. The sorrows of the time weighed heavily on her heart, and it pierced her with anguish to see month after month pass by and still no prospects of peace. She could not hope to see that restoration to the Church of the beauty of holiness, for which her soul longed with the blessed hunger after justice which is the heritage of the saints, or to behold the standard of the Cross displayed, and Christendom united in a noble cause, so long as no measures were taken for putting a stop to the war between the Father and his children. And what a war it was! We are thankful that the course of our history does not oblige us to inflict on our readers the narrative of the massacre of Cesena, when Count Robert of Geneva[1] led his mercenary troops to the slaughter of unarmed citizens. If in our own days of boasted civilisation the actual facts which attend any war are too shocking to be presented to us in their bare reality, what must it have been in a contest when the combatants on either side were hired brigands, for the time let loose to give full vent to their worst passions? But if we spare our readers the revolting details, they were not spared to St. Catherine. She knew them in all their grim deformity, and the tales of violence and

[1] Afterwards the Anti-pope Clement VII.

sacrilege that met her ears did not reach her as they come to us from the far regions of Bulgaria or the Caucasus—so softened by distance that we listen with comparative indifference to tales that would freeze the blood in our veins with horror if the scene were laid in a neighbouring town or village. To her they were close at hand, and any day the bloody tempest might come still closer, and sweep over the villages which she gazed at from her castle walls, and fill the streets of her beloved city with far worse desolation than the most awful pestilence. Well then might she take the pen with a heavy heart; what more could she say to move the heart of the Pontiff than she had already said? and perhaps there is no thought more sorrowful than that we have done all that is possible for us to do, and all with no result. Catherine was not one, however, who would cease her efforts to remedy a gigantic evil merely because no success had hitherto attended them; so once more she set herself to conjure the Holy Father in grave, tender, and most moving words to let his goodness triumph over the malice of his enemies; not to regard temporal interests or political honour, but to think of nothing but souls. "O Pastor and guardian of the Blood of the Lamb!" she cries, "forget the affronts and injuries you have received, heed not the arguments of the devil who desires to keep up war and disorder. Imitate Christ whose Vicar you are, and bear everything for the salvation of your children. Hunger for that, and consider the evils caused by this horrible war, and the blessings that would flow from peace. Alas! beloved Father, woe be to my unhappy soul, for my sins, perhaps, are the cause of all this misery![1] It seems to me as if the demon had verily just now taken possession of the world, not in his own person, indeed, but in that of us who obey him. On whatever side I turn, I see every one making use of his free-will in such a way as to render it a perverse will; all, whether secular, religious, or ecclesiastics, going after pleasures and worldly honours, in the midst of disorder and corruption.

[1] The tenderness of the original cannot be rendered in English. *Ohimè Babbo mio, disavventurata l'anima mia che le mie iniquità sono cagione d'ogni male!*

And what afflicts me more than all, is to see those who should be flowers planted in the garden of the Church to give forth a sweet odour, shedding abroad nothing but the infection of sin. . . . We are at war with God, and the rebellious children are at war both with Him and with your Holiness. God requires you, as far as you can, to snatch the power out of the hands of the devil. Labour then to reform the corruptions of which I speak; root up those infected flowers, and plant such as will give forth a sweet odour, even just men who fear God. I implore you, then, to agree to peace, and agree to such terms as are possible to be obtained; respecting always the rights of the Church and your own conscience. You must think more of souls than of things temporal. Act generously, and God will be with you, and even if you foresee troubles, fear nothing, but fortify yourself in our Sweet Jesus. It is in the midst of thorns that the rose blossoms, and it will be in the midst of persecutions that the Holy Church will be reformed. You are our instrument. Do what you have to do, then, fearlessly and in love.

"I have a great desire once more to find myself in the presence of your Holiness, and should have many things to say, but I am prevented by pressing affairs. Peace, peace, and no war, that is the only thing we want. I write to you from our new monastery that you have granted me under the title of Our Lady of the Angels. I humbly ask your benediction. Your negligent sons F. Raymund and Master John recommend themselves to your Holiness."[1]

It is probable that Gregory had himself proposed her coming to Rome, and that the concluding sentence in Catherine's letter contains her reply to this proposal. What the particular affairs were, to which she here alludes, we do not know. Raymund with his habitual vagueness says that after their return from Avignon to Siena they "visited in the environs some servants of God to console themselves with them in the Lord, and returned to the city on the feast of St. Mark the Evangelist." This may probably be understood of a visit to Lecceto, which is at an easy distance

[1] Letter 12.

from Belcaro. It would seem, however, that Catherine found on her return much on which to employ her charity in the reconciliation of feuds among her fellow-citizens. A great undertaking of this nature was to engage her attention during the ensuing autumn, and it was probably the negotiations which had to be gone through in preparation for that important affair which detained her at Siena, and obliged her to defer all present thought of visiting Rome. She was, therefore, unable to support the arguments in her letter by the more powerful influence of her presence; yet, as will be seen in the sequel, they were not forgotten by Gregory, and it was to her at last that he turned in his perplexity, conferring on her the sublime though perilous office of mediatrix of peace.

CHAPTER III

The Bread of Life

BEFORE Catherine left Avignon she had received from the hands of the Pope several most important privileges, which were secured to her by formal briefs, some of which are still in existence. By one of these his Holiness appointed three confessors to attend her in her journeys and hear the confessions of such persons as might be won to God by her pious words and exhortations; and to these confessors he granted the fullest powers. Two were named by him in the document; they were F. Raymund of Capua, and F. John Tantucci, the Augustinian. The third was left to her own selection, and she appears to have named F. Bartholomew Dominic, and in his absence, F. Thomas della Fonte.

By another brief, permission was given her wherever she might be, to have a chapel with a portable altar in her house, for Mass to be celebrated there, if need be, before daybreak, and for her to communicate at the Mass without requiring leave from any other person whatsoever, the same permission being extended to all those who assisted at it. This privilege, which in St. Catherine's time was a very unusual one to be enjoyed by any private individual, was granted to her in order to release her from the difficulties made to her frequent Communions, and also to obviate the inconveniences attending those wonderful and habitual ecstasies which rendered it impossible for her to pay her devotions in the public churches without drawing on herself an amount of notice both friendly and adverse. At Avignon, as we have seen, the kindly consideration of Gregory had provided her with a

private chapel; and from the time of her return thence she possessed the same boon at Siena. One of her first cares on finding herself once more at home was to select a suitable room in the house for the purpose; and with her own hands to prepare the necessary vestments and altar furniture. The room which served as St. Catherine's private chapel is still shown in the Fullonica. You ascend to it by the stairs, those same stairs up which, according to the beautiful old legend, the angels so often carried her as a child; the altar is still there, together with a number of objects formerly used by the Saint, and now preserved as relics. The altar furniture is preserved, not here, but in the Sacristy of San Domenico, where are shown the corporal, pall, towel, and chalice cover; also the pax and the altar stone, which last is formed of a piece of the stone on which St. Thomas of Canterbury was martyred, and is said by Burlamacchi (in his MS. notes to the Legend) to have been given to her by her English disciple, F. William Flete. There too is the original Brief of Pope Gregory XI. of which we have just spoken, the whole being preserved in a box covered with velvet.[1]

It need not be said that the possession of this chapel was a blessing most highly prized by Catherine. The first notice which occurs of its use was on that 25th of April when, as we have said, after some visits paid in the environs of the city, she returned to Siena in company with F. Raymund of Capua, who gives the narrative as follows :—

"When we arrived at Catherine's house, the hour of Tierce had already passed. She turned towards me and said, 'O Father, did you but know how hungry my poor soul is!' I understood her meaning, and rejoined, 'The hour of saying Mass is nearly elapsed, and I am so fatigued that it is very difficult for me to prepare myself for it.' She remained silent a moment; but soon, unable to prevent expressing her desire, she said to me again, 'I

[1] *Succinto Ragguaglio della Sacra Testa ed altre reliquie di S. Caterina.* (Lucca. 1713.) This little book was drawn up by P. Angiolo Carapelli, then Sacristan of San Domenico. Signor Grottanelli testifies to having seen these objects in the year 1867.

am very hungry.' I then consented to her request, and repairing to the chapel in her house which had been granted her by the Holy Father, I heard her confession, clothed myself in my sacerdotal vestments, and celebrated the Mass of the day; I consecrated one small Host for her, and when I had communicated, turning to give her the ordinary absolution, I beheld her face as it had been the face of an angel, sending forth rays of light, and so transfigured that it seemed not to be the same. I thought within myself, 'That is not the face of Catherine!' Then presently I said, 'Yet, certainly, O Lord, this *is* Thy faithful and beloved spouse!' Considering these things I turned to the altar, and said, not with my lips, but as it were in my mind only, 'Come, O Lord, to Thy spouse!' And the thought had hardly been formed in my mind when lo! the sacred Host, before I had touched It, moved and came towards me (as I could plainly see) for the space of three fingers or more, till it reached the paten which I held in my hand."

And here seems the right place to speak of those stupendous wonders which marked the intercourse of Catherine with her Lord and Spouse in Holy Communion, and which were, we may say, daily witnessed and attested by Raymund and others no less conscientious and worthy of credit.

No one can read the Legend without being struck with the singular love of truth which seems the characteristic of the writer. It bears on its pages the proofs of being the testimony of one timid rather than over ready in accepting the marvellous; of one who sifted the evidence of others, and was disposed to doubt and test that of his own senses, and who, far from magnifying the statements he receives, or repeating them merely as he hears them, often qualifies them in minute particulars in a way which reveals the delicacy of his sense of truth.

We may therefore safely trust his narrative, corroborated as it is by the overwhelming testimony of those who knew Catherine longer than he, and who had watched and noted down what they saw day by day as it occurred. Holy Communion was then to Catherine, literally, the BREAD OF LIFE. It was very generally

believed and reported that she communicated daily, but, says Raymund, that was not strictly true; "she did not communicate daily, but very often;" or, as he elsewhere expresses it, "she communicated daily, when not hindered by bodily infirmity, or the necessity of her neighbours; and if deprived of it for any notable time, she suffered visibly, so as to seem in danger of death." She never approached the altar without beholding things above the senses, specially when receiving Holy Communion. Thus she frequently saw in the hands of the priest the figure of an infant or a beautiful child; at other times she beheld a furnace of fire, into which the priest seemed to enter at the moment when he consumed the sacred species. She commonly perceived a delicious and extraordinary odour when communicating; and an ineffable joy took possession of her soul, which caused her heart to beat so as to be even audible to those who were near her. Father Thomas della Fonte, her first confessor, carefully verified this fact, and declares that the noise occasioned by this beating of the heart was unlike anything ordinary; it was of a wholly supernatural character, the jubilee of a heart exulting in the living God. Caffarini collected in his Supplement many other facts which had come to his own knowledge, or which he quotes from the notes of F. Thomas; for the sake of brevity we will give the summary which he makes of them in the *Leggenda Minore:* "Sometimes she saw the holy angels serving around the altar at which the Mass was celebrated, holding in their hands a golden veil, or in company with the saints, praising and blessing God. Sometimes she saw three Faces in one substance, or the altar and the priest wrapt in a flame of fire. At other times a great and marvellous splendour seemed to shine forth from the altar; or again, when the priest divided the sacred Host, it was manifestly shown how all was in each part; and often she beheld the Holy Trinity under various appearances and signs. Sometimes the sacred Host was transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ Himself, at various ages, or she beheld It consecrated under the appearances of fire, flesh, or blood. Often also she saw above the altar the Queen of Heaven who

reverently adored the Blessed Sacrament; besides which, on many occasions, she discerned a consecrated from an unconsecrated Host."[1]

In his Supplement he adds a remark that must not be omitted in this place. "It must be observed," he says, "*that none of the things above mentioned were seen by her with the material eyes of her body, but with those of the mind, supernaturally illuminated by God:* for she could not so much as raise her eyes to look at and adore the Divine Sacrament without being rapt and abstracted from her corporal senses: whence it sometimes happened that at the moment when the Priest raised the holy Body of Christ for the adoration of the faithful, she neither beheld It, nor heard the sound of the bell, and so failed to give those exterior demonstrations of worship which are customary with the faithful. There were not wanting those who wondered and took scandal at this, persuading themselves and others that during the time of the Holy Sacrifice she was indevout and distracted. Others, who better understood her habit of praying in profound ecstasy of mind, would approach and kiss with tenderness the place where she had knelt, which was generally some remote corner of the church where she might as far as possible avoid observation."[2]

The irrepressible sentiments of love and tenderness which the sight of the Blessed Sacrament, or even proximity to the altar or tabernacle, excited in Catherine's heart, were often the occasion of her receiving humiliations and reproofs. The priests who celebrated complained that they were disturbed by the sound of her sighs and weeping; and F. Thomas della Fonte, aware of this, begged her one feast of St. Lawrence to command and suppress these exterior signs as much as possible, or else to keep at a distance from the altar. Catherine obeyed, and remained at a distance; but she besought God to make known to her confessor that the exterior tokens of Divine love cannot always be thus repressed; and her prayer was so perfectly heard and answered, that he never again made her the like admonition.

[1] *Leg. Min.*, Part 2, chap. xii. p. 142.
[2] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 6, § 1.

"I presume," says Raymund, who tells this story, "that it was out of humility he would say no more; and that he had learnt by a happy experience how impossible it is for a soul smitten with the love of God entirely to repress its transports."

If with some the exterior effects which were thus produced formed matter of complaint, others, and by far the greater number, drew from what they heard and beheld at such moments an increase in their own souls of faith and devotion. Caffarini tells us that he himself saw the Saint on the day when she received that mysterious purification in the Precious Blood of her Divine Spouse, which has been related in a former chapter. "Her face," he says, "was resplendent and bathed in tears; and so she always appeared after Holy Communion, nor is it possible to convey the sentiment which the spectacle inspired. On a certain feast of the Circumcision, sacred to the memory of the first effusion of that Price of our salvation, she assisted at Mass in the chapel of the Sisters of Penance, though at the time so weak that without assistance she was unable to kneel or raise her head. Having communicated, she remained for several hours wholly immersed in God, and at length, rising to return home, she left the church; when at the door she beheld the glorious vision of Him, from Whom her heart was never separated, and Who, casting on her a look of ineffable tenderness, addressed her with these words, 'Come to me, beloved daughter!' She reverently approached, and received from Him that Sacred Kiss of which the Spouse speaks in the Canticles; and for many days afterwards a wonderful and extraordinary fragrance was perceptible, not to herself only, but to all who approached her." F. Bartholomew Dominic tells us, in his deposition, that he frequently gave her Holy Communion, and that often at the moment of doing so he felt the Sacred Host agitated, as it were, in his fingers, and escape from them of Itself. "This at first troubled me," he says, "for I feared lest the Sacred Host should fall to the ground; but It seemed to fly into her mouth. Several persons have told me that the like happened to them when giving her Holy Communion."

Of her condition after Communion, Bartholomew likewise speaks: "Having received the Sacred Host, her mind was immediately rapt in God, so that she lost the use of her exterior senses, and the members of her body became so rigid that you might have broken, but you could not have bent them. Every day she remained thus, for three hours or more, perfectly abstracted and insensible. Often when in such ecstasies, she would speak to God, uttering prayers and profound meditations in a distinct voice, which was audible to those who were present, and moved them to devout and tender tears. These prayers were many of them collected, and written down word for word, some by me, and some by others. None of her words at such times seemed those of a woman, but they were full of the wisdom of learned doctors. For truly it was not she who spoke, but the Holy Spirit who spoke in her."[1]

What passed at such times between her soul and God was known to none but herself, and when she sought to declare it even to her confessor, the power of language failed. "One day," says Raymund, "I saw her ravished out of her senses, and I heard her speaking in an undertone; I approached, and distinctly heard her say in Latin, *Vidi arcana Dei*—'I have seen the secrets of God.' She added nothing to this phrase, but continually repeated, 'I have seen the secrets of God.' Long after, when she was restored to herself, she still repeated the same words. I wished to know the reason. 'Mother,' I said to her, 'why, pray, do you constantly repeat the same words, and not explain them by speaking to us as usual?' 'It is impossible for me,' said she, 'to say anything else, or to say otherwise.' 'But why? you are accustomed to tell us what God has revealed to you when we do not interrogate you, why do you decline answering when we inquire of you?' 'Were I to try and express to you what I saw,' she replied, 'I should reproach myself as guilty of vain words: it seems to me that I should blaspheme God and dishonour Him by my language. The distance is so vast between what my spirit contemplated, when ravished in God, and everything I could

[1] Process, 1346.

describe to you, that I feel I should be deceiving you in speaking of these things. I must therefore not attempt their description; all that I can say is, that I saw ineffable things!'"

To these statements we must add one narrative which is given at length by Raymund. He gives no date, but the occurrence evidently belongs to the earlier period of his acquaintance with the Saint. It chanced one morning that Catherine having expressed a great desire to communicate, he went to the church to prepare for Mass, but in the meanwhile, being overwhelmed with an unusual increase in the pain in her side and other infirmities, she sent one of her companions to beg him as a charity to defer doing so for a little while, when she hoped to be sufficiently well to be able to come to the church. "I cheerfully consented," he says, "and went to the choir, where, after reciting my office, I continued to wait. Meanwhile Catherine had come to the church unknown to me, about the hour of Tierce; but her companions seeing that it was late, persuaded her not to communicate that day, for they knew that after Communion she would remain some hours in ecstasy and so cause murmurs, and a great trouble to the brethren who must wait so long a time to shut the church doors. With her usual humility and readiness to obey the will of others, she did not presume to oppose their wishes; nevertheless, she took refuge in prayer, and kneeling at a bench placed at the further end of the church, she entreated her Divine Spouse that since men could not accomplish the desire He had put into her heart, He would Himself in some measure be pleased to satisfy it. Almighty God, Who never despises the prayer of His servants, deigned to hear her in a wonderful manner. I was ignorant of what had passed, and believed her to be at home, when one of the Sisters came to me and told me that Sister Catherine begged me not to delay any longer saying my Mass, as it had been agreed that she should not communicate that day.

"I went at once, therefore, to vest in the Sacristy, and said Mass at the altar of St. Paul at the upper end of the church. Catherine was thus separated from me the whole length of the building, and I was entirely ignorant of her being there. After

the consecration and the *Pater Noster* I proceeded, according to the rubrics, to divide the Host. At the first fraction, the sacred Host, instead of separating into two portions, divided into three, two large and one small, which seemed to me about the length of a bean, but not so wide. This particle, which I attentively observed, appeared to fall on the corporal by the side of the chalice above which I had broken the Host; I clearly saw it descend towards the altar, but I could not afterwards distinguish it on the corporal. Presuming that it was the whiteness of the corporal which prevented my discerning this particle, I broke off another, and after saying the *Agnus Dei*, consumed the Sacred Host. As soon as my right hand was at liberty, I felt on the corporal for the particle on the spot where it had fallen; but I found nothing. Much troubled, I went on with the Mass, and having finished the Communion, I renewed my search, examining the corporal in every possible way, but could discover nothing either by sight or touch. This afflicted me even to tears; but on account of those present, I resolved to finish the Mass, and afterwards carefully to examine the altar. So when every one had withdrawn I minutely examined, not only the corporal, but every part of the altar, but could discover nothing. As I stood before a large picture, it seemed impossible that the particle could have fallen behind the altar; nevertheless, for greater certainty, I looked on both sides and on the floor, but still with no result. I then determined to go and consult the Prior of the convent, and covering the altar, desired the Sacristan to allow no one to approach it till my return.

"I retired to the Sacristy, but had scarcely taken off my vestments when F. Christopher, Prior of the Carthusians, arrived. I knew him well, and had a great esteem for him: his object in coming was to beg me to obtain an interview for him with Catherine. I entreated him to wait a minute while I went and spoke with the Prior, but he replied, 'To-day is a solemn feast with us, and I must absolutely return at once to the monastery, which is, as you know, some distance from the city: I beg of you, therefore, do not detain me for I must speak with Catherine.'

So I bade the Sacristan stay and watch the altar till my return, and went with the good Prior as far as Catherine's house. There, to my surprise, they told me that she had gone to our church, and had not yet returned. We at once went back, and I found Catherine and her companions kneeling at the far end of the church. I asked one of them where she was; they replied that she was kneeling on one of the benches in an ecstasy, and as I was still troubled at the accident that had occurred, I begged of them to do what they could do to rouse her, as we were in great haste. They obeyed, and when we were seated with the Prior, I told her my anxiety in a low voice and in few words. She smiled gently, and replied, just as if she had known all the particulars, 'Did you not search for it diligently?' On my answering that I had done so, 'Why, then, are you so troubled?' she said, and again she smiled. I already felt more tranquil, and said, 'Mother, I verily believe it was *you* who took that consecrated particle.' 'Nay, Father,' she replied, 'do not accuse me of that; it was not me, but *Another;* all I can tell you is, you will never find it again. Then I pressed her to explain what had happened. 'Father,' she said, 'trouble yourself no more about that particle; I will tell you the truth as to my spiritual father; it was brought to me by our Divine Lord Himself. My companions urged me not to communicate this morning in order to avoid certain murmurs. I was unwilling to be troublesome to any one, but I had recourse to our Lord; and He deigned to appear, and gave me with His own Sacred Hands that particle which you had consecrated. Rejoice, therefore, with me, for I have this day received a grace for which I can never sufficiently thank Him!' Her words did indeed turn my sadness into joy, and I no longer experienced the slightest anxiety."[1]

It is perhaps desirable to give a passage from the Saint's own writings, in which she speaks of some of these supernatural favours; as it will greatly assist us in rightly comprehending matters most difficult to render into ordinary language, yet regarding which her own utterances are as exact as they are sublime.

[1] Legend, Part 2, ch. xii.

It occurs in her Dialogue, and the words are spoken as in the Person of the Eternal Father:

"Beloved daughter, open the eye of your intellect, and behold the benefit which you receive in this Sacrament. With what eye can you behold and touch this mystery? Not with mere bodily sight and touch; for here the bodily senses fail. For the eye indeed beholds only the whiteness of the Bread, the hand touches, and the taste discerns nothing else but Bread; so that the grosser senses of the body are deceived, but the senses of the soul cannot be deceived. It is those senses which taste and see and touch the Blessed Sacrament. What is the eye that sees? The eye of the Intellect, the pupil of which is Holy Faith. That eye beholds, under the whiteness of the Bread, all God and all Man; the Divine Nature united to the Human Nature, the Body, the Blood, and the Soul of Christ; the Soul united to the Body, and the Body and the Soul united to My Divine Nature, not apart from Me; as you may remember, in the beginning of your life I manifested to you, not only to the eye of your intellect only, but also to that of your body:[1] although by reason of the great light the bodily eye lost its powers of vision, and the sight of the intellect alone remained. I showed it to you to deliver you from the attack which the enemy brought against you on the matter of this Sacrament, and to make you increase in love for It, in the light of Holy Faith. For you remember how, going one morning to the church at break of day to hear Mass, having been before much tormented by the enemy, you placed yourself before the altar of the Crucifix, and the priest came to the altar of Mary. And reflecting on your sins, you feared lest you had offended Me by reason of the trouble which the demon had caused you; and you thought of My charity whereby you had been counted worthy to

[1] These words may seem a contradiction to those previously quoted from Caffarini. But, as will be seen, she presently adds that the corporal sight failed before these stupendous revelations, and that that of the intellect alone remained. If any would argue from this that visions unseen by the bodily eye are no visions at all, we must refer them to St. Theresa for the explanation of a subject which cannot be measured by the perceptions of flesh and blood.

hear that Mass, whereas you reputed yourself as unworthy so much as to enter My Temple. When the priest was about to consecrate, you raised your eyes, and as he pronounced the sacred words, I manifested Myself to you. And you saw coming forth from My Breast a light like the rays of the sun which proceed from the body of the sun, yet without separating from its disc; and in the Light a Dove, all united one with the other, and It smote into the Host, in virtue of the words of Consecration. Then, because your bodily eye could not sustain that light, the eye of your intellect alone remained able to gaze on it, and with it you saw and tasted the Abyss of the Holy Trinity; all God and all Man, hidden and veiled under the whiteness of the bread. And you saw that neither the Light, nor the presence of the Word which intellectually you beheld there, took away the whiteness of the bread; the one did not prevent or interfere with the other; neither the beholding of God and Man in the bread, nor the beholding of the bread, which lost nothing either of its whiteness, or its touch, or its savour." (*Dial. ch.* cxi.)

In another place, after saying that "the soul must make the place of its abode in Christ Crucified, *dwelling and hiding itself in the Cavern of His Side; and finding in His opened Heart the love of God and of our neighbour,*" she goes on to speak of an occasion when the sweet odour of the Blessed Sacrament remained sensible to her for many days after receiving.[1]

She also relates how on one of those many occasions when, having asked to communicate, she had been refused by the priest who was about to celebrate, his heart was touched with compunction, and before the end of the Mass he bade her approach. On another occasion, of which she speaks, her longing desires for the Bread of life were satisfied, not by man, but by God. It was on the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul; and having a great desire to communicate on that day in honour of the Apostle so specially dear to her, she was refused in succession by every priest who came to celebrate, God so permitting it that she might know that if men failed her He would not. When the

[1] Dialogo, chap. cxxiv.

last Mass came, she humbly made known her wish to the server, but he would not so much as tell the priest. So when the Mass was over and she remained with the hunger of her soul unsatisfied, Almighty God drew her to Himself in an ineffable manner, so that her soul being united and drawn to Him, her body remained suspended in the air; and in this ecstasy she was communicated in a miraculous manner; and in token of the fact, she was conscious of the same delicious savour which she so often experienced after Communion, and which was continued for several days.

If the reluctance exhibited by so may priests to give Communion to the Saint appears amazing, it must be borne in mind that the practice of frequent Communion had at that time become rare; even devout persons often contented themselves with approaching the altar once a year, or, at most, at those festivals called in Tuscany "Pasque," for the term *Pasqua* was applied not to Easter alone, but to all the great festivals of our Lord, such as Christmas, the Epiphany, and the Ascension. The custom of frequent Communion, as we understand the term, was not generally revived until the sixteenth century; nevertheless, it is not to be doubted that the practice which was in use among St. Catherine's disciples of weekly communion,[1] did much to render that devout and salutary habit more common in the Church.

She wearied not of warning her disciples against the delusive humility that would excuse itself from Communion through pretended unworthiness, instead of seeking to render itself worthy. "I say rather," she writes to Ristoro Canigiani, "that we must receive that sweet Sacrament because it is the food of our souls, for without that food we cannot preserve the life of grace. A man should do what he can to remove such things as would hinder his approach; and when he has done all he can, it is enough. It may seem to him that he has not perfect contrition or other dispositions, but he is not to stay away on that account, for his good-will is sufficient, and that is the real disposition

[1] See letter 281, addressed to Neri Landoccio: "Be not negligent in prayer, and go to Communion every Sunday."

required of him. I will not therefore have you act like those who neglect to fulfil the precepts of the Church because, as they say, they are not worthy. And so they pass years in mortal sin, and never receive the food of their souls. Oh, what a foolish sort of humility is this! Who does not see that you are not worthy? And when do you expect to become so? You will not be more fit at the end than at the beginning. All the good we could do would never in that sense render us worthy. God alone is worthy of Himself, and He can render us worthy by His own worthiness, which never diminishes."[1]

To the same effect she writes to her disciple, Andrea Vanni, in a letter, wherein she speaks not only of the necessity of actual, but of the benefit of spiritual, Communion. The passage is every way remarkable, and may be quoted as a fair specimen of her vigorous style of practical instruction. "You should often wash your soul from every stain of sin by a good and holy confession, feeding it on the Bread of Angels, that is, the sweet Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, all God and all Man; which every faithful Christian is bound to receive at least once a year. He who desires It oftener may receive It oftener, but not less often; and for no cause may any man entirely neglect it, be he just or a sinner; for if the sinner be not fitly disposed for it, he must make himself fit. If he be just, he must not abstain out of humility, saying, "I am not worthy of so high a mystery; when I am worthy I will communicate." Not so, for of his own merits he will never be worthy, and if he thought himself so, that would suffice to make him unworthy, for pride would conceal itself under the mantle of humility. God alone is capable of making us worthy, and it is clad in His worthiness that we must receive Him. And observe that there are two ways in which we may communicate—actually and spiritually. To communicate spiritually is to do so by true and ardent desire; and this desire ought not to exist only at the moment of Communion, but at all times and in all places; for it is a question of feeding the soul with the food which sustains the life of grace."

[1] Letter 229.

These clear and simple instructions, and the profound and admirable chapters in her Dialogue which treat of the Holy Mystery of the Eucharist, were the fruit of that interior light which she had received from God for the illumination of other souls. Caffarini tells us that the many visions and mysterious signs which were granted to her on this subject filled her with confusion and holy fear. Her own grand and unquestioning faith demanded no such support; and in her prayers she was wont lovingly to remonstrate with our Lord, saying, "O Lord, dost Thou then doubt the firmness of my faith? Knowest Thou not that I believe, without doubting, all, however incomprehensible, that Thou hast revealed to Thy Church, and through her manifested to Thy faithful children? Why then dost Thou, as it were, daily bestow on me these signs and repeated assurances, as though my faith were weak and vacillating?" And He replied in order to console her and make her understand the object of these supernatural favours: "Not for thy sake, O my spouse and daughter! do I manifest to thee by these prodigious signs the truth of the high mystery of My Sacrament; but for the sake of others, that they, by thy means, may be confirmed in faith."

Catherine understood from these words what God demanded of her; and in all her dealings with the souls of others, there was no one thing that was nearer her heart than to cherish and increase their faith and devotion towards this tremendous Mystery. Hence the anguish of her soul when she beheld priests, "the Ministers of the Blood," living in a manner unworthy of their sacred calling. Those who are familiar with her Dialogue will have no difficulty in recalling her words on that subject. But her apostolate was one not merely of words, but of self-sacrifice, and one instance must here be given of her astonishing generosity, in offering herself to suffer in order to procure the deliverance of another soul from temptation.

"There was a certain priest," says Caffarini,[1] "who in the act of celebrating was accustomed to feel such trouble and sadness, that he had resolved to abstain in future from offering the Holy

[1] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 6, § 2.

Sacrifice. Catherine became aware of his unhappy and foolish resolution, so she contrived that he should come to her, and addressed him, saying, 'I beg of you on no account to give up celebrating the Holy Mass; do not think any more of your troubles, but throw all the weight of them on my shoulders.' From that time the afflicted priest found himself entirely free from his interior disquietude, and resumed his former habit of celebrating with perfect tranquillity of mind. But at the very same moment that he felt himself relieved of his trial, Catherine experienced within herself the same sentiments of weariness and disgust for all things connected with the Divine service; but she accepted these sufferings with heroic charity, and with invincible vigour of soul endured and overcame them, gaining a glorious victory; and she often repeated, in thanksgiving for her own delivery as for that of the soul to whose rescue she had come, 'Oh, how loving and merciful is God to those who hope in Him!'"

It will have been observed that in her instructions to her disciples, Catherine does not omit to recommend the practice of spiritual Communion. She knew its value, and the immense graces which it may be the means of conveying to the soul, by her own experience; for at times when she was hindered from actually approaching the Holy Table, she often made use of this means to satisfy her desires; and not unfrequently these spiritual Communions were attended by circumstances no less wonderful than her actual Communions. On one occasion when the extreme weakness to which she was reduced rendered it impossible for her to set her foot outside her chamber, being thus prevented from going to the church, she resigned herself to the will of God, and began instead to pray in her cell; but she had hardly recollected herself for that purpose, when she seemed to be carried to some place, disposed like a lofty and beautiful sanctuary. She beheld assembled there a great multitude of the saints, who seemed to be assisting at a majestic function, wherein the Holy Sacrifice was offered by one clad like a Bishop, at an altar brilliant with light and magnificent in its adornments, while all around was to be heard the melody of a heavenly chant. When the

moment for Communion came, the Celebrant seemed to administer to her the Sacred Host. She understood that this Communion was only spiritual, not actual; nevertheless, as she afterwards declared, she experienced the same interior sweetness of grace, neither more nor less, as she was accustomed to receive in her other Communions.

These are but a few out of the abundant notices which we possess of that which was the heart and centre of St. Catherine's spiritual life; her daily, or all but daily, reception of the Body of her Lord. To her, as to all the saints, the Divine Sacrament was the Life of her life; in her history more remarkably made evident from the fact that she lived in times when, if the faith of men remained unclouded, their charity had grown cold, and the greatest privilege of the Christian soul was for the most part neglected. Among her own disciples, and those whom they in their turn influenced and directed, she may be said *to have revived the custom of frequent Communion*, and this is perhaps not the least title which she possesses to our gratitude and veneration.

CHAPTER IV

Rocca D'Orcia

AUGUST TO DECEMBER, 1377

IN various parts of the Legend we find allusions to a visit paid by Catherine to the castle of Rocca d'Orcia, one of the strongholds of the Salimbeni family, whose name has so often recurred in the foregoing pages. But whilst relating some of the incidents of this visit, Raymund gives us no information either as to its causes, or the time when it took place. Happily ample materials are to be found in the Process, and in the letters of the Saint, which enable us to set before the reader in a complete form what is undoubtedly one of the most interesting episodes in her life; but to render the story, and the letters which illustrate it more intelligible, we must begin by saying a few words on the family whose members were brought into such close contact with Catherine.

The Salimbeni ranked from very early times among the most powerful lords of Tuscany. The Sienese chroniclers are never weary of extolling their valour, their prudence, and their noble ancestry. A Salimbeni was found in the ranks of those Crusaders who fought with Boemond under the walls of Antioch. Agnolino Avolo Salimbeni was reckoned the richest noble in Italy, and was chosen Captain, or chief ruler of Orvieto. His son, John Agnolino Salimbeni, was head of the Ghibelline, or Imperial party in Siena; "A great and illustrious man," says Malevolti, "who served his country well." For ten years he had exercised such power in the Republic, as to be regarded almost as Lord of the

city of Siena. Of the part taken by the family during the Revolution of 1368, we have already spoken; nor would it be fair to allow the fact of their acting as heads of the Ghibelline faction in Siena to prejudice us against them, as though this necessarily implied that they were disloyal to the Holy See. It implied merely that they were opposed to the democracy which had seized exclusive possession of the government, and that they sought, under the protection of the Emperor, to regain for the aristocratic class a certain share of political power. As chiefs of this faction there existed a strong rivalry between them and the Tolomei, who were regarded as the leaders of the Guelphs; and the feud between the two families was promoted in every possible way by the Heads of the republican government, who trusted by this unworthy policy to paralyse the power of both great families. In the petty wars which followed the Revolution, the Salimbeni incurred immense losses; but after peace had been restored through the mediation of the Florentines, they succeeded in winning back a considerable degree of popular confidence, and resumed something of their former footing in the state.

Catherine, as we have seen, devoted herself energetically to the extinction of the party feuds which had either grown out of these unhappy contentions, or been fostered by them to yet more dangerous proportions; and it was probably in the course of such charitable labours that she became introduced to the Salimbeni, though the particulars of their first acquaintance have not been preserved. However it originated, it soon ripened into a friendship in which every member of the family had a share. John Agnolino Salimbeni, of whom mention has been made above, died the year previous to the Revolution, in consequence of a fall from his horse, as he was riding from Siena to Rocca d'Orcia. He left behind him his widow, the Countess Bianchina (a member of the noble house of the Trinci, lords of Foligno), and three children; Agnolino, who succeeded him, and two daughters, Benedetta and Isa. Isa was the widow of Paul Trinci of Foligno; Benedetta had likewise been twice espoused; her first husband dying shortly after their marriage, while the second did not live

to complete his nuptials. Agnolino showed himself a wise and valiant man, and took part in many affairs of importance; but besides having suffered much during the troubles of the Revolution and in his feud with the Tolomei, he had to defend himself against his own kinsman Cione Salimbeni, whose restless ambition was always causing trouble. The immediate cause of their present quarrel was the fact that Agnolino, desirous of reconciling himself with the government of the republic, had caused himself to be enrolled among the plebeian families, and had favoured the popular cause; receiving from the Magistrates in token of their restored confidence the castles of Monte Giovi, Montorio, Castiglione di Val d'Orcia, Rocca Federighi, and some others. This aroused the jealousy of Cione, and threatened to cause the outbreak of a fresh feud between the two kinsmen. In Catherine's correspondence with the different members of the family, references are made to all these circumstances. To the Countess Bianchina she writes as to a dear friend and disciple, while the two daughters looked to her for advice and support in their home difficulties. Isa in her widowhood desired to take the habit of Penance, and Benedetta wished to leave the world altogether and retire to a convent. Both proposals were exceedingly distasteful to their brother, with whom Catherine undertook to plead their cause, encouraging them meanwhile to persevere in their holy purposes. She seems to have been successful in clearing away the obstacles which opposed themselves to Isa's design; for in a Brief of Urban VI., granting a Plenary Indulgence in the hour of death to fifty Tertiaries of St. Dominic, and dated March 29th, 1380, the name of "Isa, daughter of John Agnolino," heads the list. Two of the Saint's letters to Benedetta are preserved, in which she refers in a very touching manner to the profound experience of the nothingness of earthly joys which had been brought home to the young Countess by her successive bereavements. "The soul that loves and serves the world," she says, "is like a leaf tossed about with the wind; it is made subject to things that are infinitely beneath it. I would not have you subject to such a slavery, but would rather desire to see you the

servant of Jesus Crucified, Whose service is perfect sweetness. Oh, love this sweet and glorious Spouse Who can never die! Other spouses die and pass away like the wind. You know the truth of what I say, for in a brief space of time the world has struck you two terrible blows; and God in His goodness permitted it to be so, that you might fly from the world, and take refuge in Him." She concludes by encouraging her to respond to the call of God, and lets us know that Benedetta's design was to enter the Community that was to be established at Belcaro. "The buildings are already begun, and they are hurrying on the works. It is to be called the Monastery of Our Lady of Angels; if you come thither you will enter the promised land."

She next addresses herself to "her son Agnolino," as she calls him, whom she bids to combat with his spiritual foes like a gallant knight who does not fear hard blows. And she warns him that the door by which the enemy will be most apt to enter his soul is the love of the world and its honours. This was probably the exact truth; for Agnolino had it greatly at heart to revive the former splendour and prosperity of his family, and was struggling hard to retrieve its misfortunes, and win back the favour of his countrymen. Catherine did not condemn the course he was taking in public affairs, which seems to have been honourable and worthy of praise; but she saw the danger to his soul which lurked in all these things, and did not fail to give him an affectionate word of warning. "When the enemy would enter by the love of the world and its honours," she says, "open your understanding, and see that there is neither stability nor duration in anything that the world can give. You know it well; you have seen it, you have proved it. Oh, how I long that you should understand that it is not by giving ourselves up to these passing and perishable things that we attain to glory, but often rather to disgrace. For they are all less than we; and if we would attain true honour and greatness, we must love and serve something greater than ourselves. God alone, our Father, the Sovereign and Eternal Goodness, deserves to be so loved and served; all things else are less than man. To despise the world

is to be truly rich and honourable, though men think just the contrary. I know all that is being said; and that the Countess (Benedetta) is well tormented on all sides because she wishes to be the servant of the servants of Jesus Christ. Worldly persons seek to persuade her and you to regard *that* as base and disgraceful which is the greatest honour you can receive; an honour not for time, but for eternity. Before God and men your glory will surpass that of all your ancestors. Fools that we are to set our love and hope on a little heap of straw! There was a great blaze at her first espousals, but it soon disappeared, and nothing remained but the smoke of sorrow. Then it seemed as though the fire was about to be rekindled, but it was again extinguished by the cold blast of death. Far better for her and for you that she should obey the call of the Holy Spirit. For you see, the world rejects her, and casts her on Christ Crucified. I do hope, then, that you will not let yourself be influenced by its judgments: impose silence on your vassals; forbid their murmurs, and show yourself firm. To act otherwise would be cowardice unworthy of a brave cavalier. This is why I said I hoped I should see you fight bravely in this new combat that you have to sustain on the subject of the Countess. The devil sees that he is going to lose her, and so he stirs up creatures to torment you. But have courage; despise the opinion of the world, and God will be with you." (Letter 267.) Only one letter is preserved addressed to the Countess Bianchina; it breathes the same spirit, and is written in much the same style. After warning her friend that we cannot serve two masters, and that the heart that desires to be full of God must necessarily first empty itself of the world, Catherine continues: "We go on always forming new attachments; if God cuts off one branch, we make another. We fear to lose perishing creatures more than to lose God. And so keeping them and possessing them against the will of God, we taste even in this life the foretaste of hell: for God so permits that a soul which loves itself with irregular love should become insupportable to itself. It suffers from everything that it possesses because it fears to lose it; and to preserve what

it possesses, there is anxiety and fatigue day and night. And it suffers from what it does not possess, because it desires what it cannot get. And so the soul is never at rest in the midst of the things of this world, for they are all less than us; they were made for us, we were not made for them. We were made for God alone, to enjoy His Eternal and Sovereign happiness.

"God alone, then, can satisfy the soul; and all that it can desire it will find in Him. The soul in Him finds peace, for He is He who is the Supreme Riches, the Supreme Power, the Supreme Goodness, the Supreme Beauty, an Ineffable Good which none can rightly appreciate; He alone can comprehend and value Himself. He both can and will satisfy all the holy desires of a soul that desires to strip itself of the world, and to be clothed with Him. Shake off your slumber then, my dearest mother, for the hour of death approaches nearer and nearer. I would have you use all these passing and temporal things as something lent, but not really belonging to you. The way to attain to this is by detaching your heart from them, and this we must do if we would be sharers in the fruit of the Blood of Jesus." (Letter 331.)

These extracts are sufficient to show on what terms Catherine stood with the family of Salimbeni. We will now proceed to unravel the narrative of her visit to Rocca in the autumn of 1377, though it appears probable that this was by no means the only occasion on which she was their guest. In that year a quarrel had broken out, as has been already stated, between Agnolino and Cione Salimbeni. Cione resided at Castiglioncello del Trinoro; and Agnolino at Rocca di Tentennano, now called Rocca d'Orcia. Stricca, the wife of Cione, was also a friend and correspondent of Catherine's, who thus had influence with both the contending parties. The castles of the two kinsmen were about ten miles apart; and (as it would seem), at the request of the noble ladies of the family, Catherine undertook to negotiate the terms of their reconciliation. For greater convenience she first took up her residence at Montepulciano, as being a spot equidistant from both castles, the three places forming a kind of triangle.

Catherine, as we know, was no new guest at Montepulciano. On this occasion she was accompanied by a considerable number of her disciples, both men and women; among others by Raymund of Capua, F. Thomas della Fonte, F. Bartholomew Dominic, Stephen Maconi, and Don Francis Malevolti; F. Thomas Caffarini afterwards joined them, coming from Orvieto. There were also F. Matthew Tolomei, the hermit Fra Santi, and several of the Saint's female companions, such as Alexia, Lisa, Cecca, and others. It seems to have been at this time that in the midst of her hard and troublesome negotiations, the peace and tranquillity of the convent enclosure almost gained her heart. "Do you know," she says, writing to Agnes, Donna Malevolti, who after her husband's death had entered among the Sisters of Penance, "I feel half disposed to say, 'Let us make here three tabernacles,' for it seems to me a real paradise to be with these holy religious. They all love us so much, they are hardly willing to let us depart. As to Cecca, she is already half a nun, for she begins to say the office well, in choir with the nuns." (Letter 183.) However, very different duties awaited her from the sweet chanting of the office, and the charms of regular life which she knew so well how to appreciate. Her first expedition was to Castiglioncello, where she was well received by Cione Salimbeni, and found no difficulty in inducing him to come to terms of peace. The next matter was to obtain the like compliance from Agnolino; and for that purpose Catherine set out for Rocca d'Orcia. "The spot so called," writes Jerome Gigli, in his Preface to the Saint's letters, "stands above the valley of the Orcia, about twenty-three miles distant from Siena, and may be seen by travellers from the Roman road, standing on a sharp and steep rock projecting from the mountain side. The olives flourish here better than anything else that is cultivated. Fitly might a column be erected on this mountain path warning pilgrims to salute that rugged rock where the Dove of Siena brought the olive of peace! Truly was that rock terrible to Lucifer, discomfited there by the saintly virgin who drove him from the bodies and souls he had so long possessed!"

The river Orcia, from which the valley takes its name, is one

of those many mountain streams which flow into the Ombrone, and divides the hill on which Montalcino stands from the loftier group of Cetona, Radicofani, and Monte Amiata. These are the three highest mountains in the vicinity of Siena, and the scenery among their savage ravines is exceedingly grand. From their summit, and specially from that of Monte Amiata, may be seen the long range of the Apennines, and the whole extent of the Tuscan Maremma. The Roman Campagna also appears in the southern distance; while to the west is the blue expanse of the Mediterranean, studded with its islands. Even in our own day it is a wild and savage region, and only a century ago, when the celebrated botanist, Peter Antonio Micheli, undertook his scientific journey through the territory of Siena, he found no small difficulty in forcing a way over these mountains; the thickets of beeches which grow out of the fissures of the rocks on Monte S. Fiora preventing the passage of his horse. It may well be imagined, therefore, that in St. Catherine's time these rocky fastnesses were still more difficult of access, and the prospect of a residence in the stronghold of a mountain chieftain might not have been without its terrors to a less fearless soul. The wild soldiery who gathered around the castles of these chieftains, and formed their garrisons, were little better than banditti, and had spent their lives in murderous feuds, which scarcely deserved the name of civil wars. Among these rude warriors the holy maiden of Siena now came to speak of peace and brotherly love; strange words which sounded in their ears like an unknown tongue, for the comprehension of which they needed, as it were, new faculties. Long habits of ruthless violence, long years spent without prayer or sacraments, had hardened their hearts and obscured their understandings. The Evil One had indeed laid his grasp on these poor souls, and seemed to claim their wild and desolate region as his own; and he was to be dispossessed, and rudely put to flight by her, whose fragile form might have been seen one August evening ascending the mountain path that led to the castle, mounted on her little ass,[1] and surrounded by her faithful disciples.

[1] *Secondo lei, sopra un asinello.* (Leg., Part 3, ch. vi.).

She was affectionately received both by Agnolino and his mother, who is described as "a lady of great virtue and talent, and most devout to the Saint." Through her influence Catherine found no difficulty in effecting the chief object of her mission; and the reconciliation of the two kinsmen was happily secured. Such an example was not lost on their neighbours, and other lords and chieftains were led to lay down their quarrels at Catherine's feet, so that she was detained for more than four months in these parts, appeasing discords, and restoring peace to many an unhappy family. At the mere sight of her the fiercest hearts were pacified, and the influence of her sanctity and eloquence was greatly increased by the wonders God was pleased to work through her means.

Of some of these a very exact and interesting account has been left by Don Francesco Malevolti, and as his narrative has never yet been published, certain portions of it shall be here extracted, which are the more valuable as being the testimony of an eye-witness. After relating the circumstances which led to Catherine's coming into these parts, and the extraordinary success of her mission, he continues: "The Countess Bianchina bore so great a reverence for the holy virgin that she took care to keep near her day and night. And as her fame for holiness spread far and near, it happened one day that there came a crowd of men, twelve or fourteen in number, from a certain village called Rocca Strada. They had with them a mare, on which was a man bound with many ropes, and with iron shackles on his hands and feet. He was so full of rage and fury, that no one dared approach him, for he tore with his teeth any person who came near him, and his screams and bellowings were rather infernal than human. So these men brought him thus bound to Agnolino's fortress, that they might lay him at the feet of Catherine. When they had entered the court of the castle they laid down the demoniac, bound as he was, with no small fear; which being done, two of those who had brought him went to the place where the Lady Bianchina was in company with Catherine, and drawing the Countess apart, they spoke to her in secret. Then she returned, and addressing

Catherine in coaxing words, 'My sweetest Mamma,' she said (for by this name of *Mamma* they all called her), 'let us go away from hence.' 'Mother,' replied Catherine, with great humility, 'I know very well that this is not the hour when you wish to depart hence; nevertheless, when the hour comes, I will obey your commands.' In fact, she knew perfectly well what the noble lady wished her to do. But after the Countess had, on various pretences, urged her to come, and Catherine, on the other hand, had as repeatedly declined, overcome at last by so many entreaties, as one who knew not how to refuse anything that was asked of her, she bowed her head, and left the room with the Lady Bianchina, and we others followed them, to the number of more than sixteen persons. We all went out into the court where the demoniac lay, still bound; who, when he saw the holy virgin Catherine, uttered such terrific yells that we all remained terrified. Then he rolled on the ground, making unspeakably hideous gestures; and if he had not been bound with many cords, some of the bystanders would have been in no small danger. When the holy virgin beheld him so behaving, she turned to the Countess, saying, 'O lady! what has this poor man done that they have so bound him? For the love of God, bid them loose him, that he may not be thus tortured.' But the Countess replied, 'These men are greatly afraid of him; for with his teeth, and in every way that he can, he attacks those who come near him. Command, however, what you will regarding him, and they will at once do it.' So with many sweet words the holy virgin entreated the men, saying, 'My dearest brothers, do not suffer this creature of God to be thus put to pain; loose him, for there is nothing at all the matter with him, and then, for the love of God, give him some refreshment.' Then they replied, 'O lady! we have hitherto greatly feared him, for he has shockingly maltreated some of our people; nevertheless, we are ready to obey your commands, provided you will engage on no account to depart from us.' So Catherine not only remained there, but drew several paces nearer to the prisoner, and desired them to loose him in the name of Jesus Christ. When she had thus spoken, the man who before seemed like a fierce wild beast, became quite

quiet, and stretched himself on the ground like one dead. The men approached, not without fear, and loosed him from his bonds; they also drew the shackles from his hands and feet, and still he made not the smallest movement. Then said the virgin, 'Now, raise him up and give him some food, for he is suffering from nothing but weakness; and you will see that when he is refreshed with food, he will no longer appear the same man.' So they raised him up, and gave him food and drink; and having fully returned to his senses, he was utterly astonished to find himself in that place, and remembered nothing of all that had passed. Humbly commending himself to Catherine, therefore, she made over him the sign of the Cross, and he departed on foot with all the company who had brought him thither, in perfect health, and was never more troubled in the same manner.

"Another man was brought to the same castle from one of the other fortresses of Agnolino. He was possessed by many wicked spirits, and those who brought him feigned that they were taking him in another direction. But the evil spirits perceiving that they were being conducted into the presence of their great adversary, as soon as they drew near the castle caused him to speak with great rage and violence, saying, 'You want to take me to that cruel enemy of mine who is always persecuting me wherever I go. But I promise you this journey shall cost every one of you dear.' Then as he was still crying out in this way, they entered the castle court. Now the Countess Bianchina was in a certain chamber of the castle with Catherine and others of both sexes, of whom I was one. The demoniac, therefore, was brought into our presence bellowing with fury, and entered the room in a very terrible manner;—nevertheless, as soon as he was there, he sprang out of the hands of those who held him, and fell prostrate at the feet of Catherine, who, according to her custom, was sitting on the ground. From that moment he spake no word, small or great, but lay as if dead. Then the holy virgin compassionating him in her heart, began to weep, and taking his head, she supported it on her bosom, whilst we stood round silent and attentive to watch the end. But after the holy virgin had lifted her eyes to

heaven, her face became all shining and radiant, whilst she silently conversed with the Eternal Spouse. Then we suddenly beheld coming forth from the form of the demoniac, as he lay on her lap, such a vast multitude of lice that it was a marvel to behold, and they went hither and thither over her garments. We, beholding the exterior but not the interior, began to say, 'O mother! remove this man from us; see you not he is covering us with lice?' But gently and devoutly smiling, she replied, 'Be not uneasy, they will not stay long;' and indeed after a short space they all disappeared, so that not so much as one of them was to be seen. Then Catherine addressing him who still lay on her lap, said, 'Arise, dear brother, and be comforted, thou shalt suffer no evil, but only a little bodily weakness.' So, causing a loaf to be brought to her, and wine, she with her own holy hands made sop in the wine, and gave it him to eat. And so being strengthened and fully delivered, he returned home on foot with his companions, praising God."

To these narratives of Don Francesco we must add the one given by Raymund in his Legend, which becomes more intelligible when we understand the circumstances which brought Catherine into these parts, and the affairs in which she was engaged. It happened that during her stay at Rocca, one of the women of the castle was suddenly seized and tormented by the Evil Spirit, whose rage was excited in a very special manner against all those who took part with Catherine in her charitable mission. The Countess, knowing how greatly averse she was to have any such cases brought to her, took counsel with the Saint's companions, and by their advice had the poor woman brought unexpectedly into her presence, trusting that the pitiful sight would suffice to move her to compassion. Catherine was just on the point of starting for a place where she had appointed to meet two persons whom she was engaged in reconciling.

"When she beheld the wretched woman, and saw that she could by no means escape, she turned to the Lady Bianchina, and said, 'Ah, Madam! God forgive you. Know you what you have done? Know you not that I am disturbed enough by

these wicked spirits, that from time to time molest mine own person; wherefore, then, do you increase my trouble by presenting others before me who are vexed with these foul fiends?' With that she turned to the woman that was possessed, and said to the wicked spirit: 'Thou malicious enemy of mankind, I charge thee, lay down thine head in this man's lap, and abide there till I come again.' She had no sooner spoken these words than the woman that was vexed laid down her head in the lap of the hermit, Fra Santi, who chanced to be present, and never moved till she came again. In the meantime, while Catherine was gone to make peace between two nobles that were at variance (whose dwelling was not far from that place), the spirit cried out by the mouth of the miserable woman, leaning her head in the hermit's lap, and said: 'Why do you hold me here? I pray you let me go, for I am very hard holden.' They that stood by made answer, saying: 'And why dost thou not go thy way? Who holdeth thee? Is not the door open?' 'Oh!' said he, 'that cursed woman hath bound me here. She holdeth me that I may not depart.' 'What woman?' said they. 'That cursed woman!' said he; and would not, or peradventure could not, name her, but after a raging manner cried out: 'That cursed creature, that cursed woman, mine enemy!' Then the hermit asked him whether he took her for his great enemy or no? 'Yea,' said he, 'the greatest that I have this day in the world.' Then those that were there present, being much disquieted with his outrageous crying, said to him: 'Hold thy peace, Catherine cometh;' meaning thereby to put him in fear, and so to cause him to cease his crying. 'No, no,' said he, 'she cometh not yet; she is in such a place;' where she was indeed. They asked him what she did there. 'What doth she?' said he; 'she is now doing a thing (as she is at all times) wherein I take small pleasure.' And with that he cried out again very sore, and said, 'Ah! why am I thus holden here?' And it was evidently seen that he never moved from that place where the holy maid charged him to abide till her coming again. At the last he said, 'Now is that cursed woman coming.' They demanded of him

where she was. 'She is now,' said he, 'in such a place, and now she is gone from thence, and goeth towards such a place.' And so declared, from time to time, how she passed from place to place, until at length, when she was come to the gate of the house where they were, he said, 'Now, she is come.' When she had entered the house, and began to come towards the chamber wherein they awaited her return, he cried out with a loud voice and said, 'Ah! why hold ye me here by force?' The holy maid made answer and said, 'Arise, wretch, and get thee hence, and leave this creature of God, and from this hour forward see that thou never be so hardy as once to molest her again.' And with that it was seen that the wicked fiend forsook all the other parts of that woman's body, and gathered himself into her throat, where he made such a horrible swelling that it moved as many as were present to great compassion. Then the holy maid made the sign of the Cross over the place that was swollen, and forthwith he departed from the woman, and went his way, and left the woman safe and sound, in the presence of a great many that were there, who saw this evident miracle with their eyes. Now when she was fully come to herself again, and knew the place and persons that were about her, she had great marvel, and asked some of her acquaintance what she did there and how she came thither. They made her answer, and declared unto her in what case she had been, and what had been done by the holy maid about her delivery. When she heard that, she was astonished, and said that in truth she could remember no such thing. Only this she confessed, that her body was very sore shaken and bruised, as if it had been beaten with a club. Of this evident miracle were witnesses the Lady Bianchina, the holy hermit Santi, in whose lap it was done, and more than thirty other persons." [1]

From Rocca, the Saint proceeded to the abbey of St. Anthimo, he abbot of which place, F. Giovanni di Ser Gano di Orvieto, was, as we have seen, the Commissary for the foundation of our Lady of Angels, and one of Catherine's greatest friends. St.

[1] Fen., Part 2, ch. xxxv.

Anthimo was about five miles from Montalcino, which town had formerly been subject to the abbots, but had long before this date been made over to the republic of Siena. In Catherine's time, not only was the temporal authority of the abbots lost, but their spiritual jurisdiction likewise was attacked by the Archpriests of Montalcino. The troubles arising out of these disputes appear to have had some share in bringing the Saint to St. Anthimo, and she took up her residence at the grand old abbey which then stood, with its church with three naves, in a valley between two mountains. A little later it fell into decay, and was finally suppressed by Pius II., so that as Carapelli writes in his *Corso Cronotastico*, a few shepherds only now inhabit the spot formerly peopled with monks. Catherine remained here some weeks, and it was from hence that she addressed a letter to the magistrates of Siena (Letter 201), from which we gather that murmurs had already arisen in the city in consequence of her journey. "I hear," she says, "from the Archpriest of Montalcino and others, that you have passed an unfavourable judgment on the Abbot of St. Anthimo, a great servant of God. He has been here a long time, and if you knew him better you would not suspect him. I beg of you, therefore, not to trouble him, but rather, if necessary, to assist him. You complain that priests and clerics are not corrected, and yet when you find some one willing to do it, you complain of him and raise obstacles. As to my return with my spiritual family, I am told that there are murmurs and suspicions on that score also, but I do not know if I ought to believe it. If you took as much interest in your own affairs as we do for you, you and all the citizens of Siena would close your ears to such things. We are incessantly labouring for your good, sparing ourselves no fatigue. I have so little virtue that I do nothing perfectly, but others who are better than me are doing their utmost, and the ignorance and ingratitude of our fellow-citizens will not prevent them from persevering even unto death. I love you all better than you love yourselves, and desire nothing so much as your peace and welfare; do not suppose that I, or any of my companions, can feel differently. I see that the devil is very

angry at the loss of souls which he will suffer by this journey. I have come here only to feed on souls, and withdraw them out of his hands; and for that I would sacrifice a thousand lives if I had them. I shall go, therefore, where, and act in whatever way the Holy Spirit may inspire me. You must not be weary of reading my letters, but bear with me patiently."

Catherine was as good as her word; in spite of the narrow-minded jealousies and reports to her disadvantage which were propagated in Siena, and which from time to time reached her ears, she remained at St. Anthimo for several weeks, and at no period of her life was the fruit of her prayers and exhortations more abundant. Such was the concourse of those who came to see and hear her, and who flocked from all the country round, that no one who had not seen it (say the witnesses) could have believed it. Every day they poured over the mountains, not by hundreds, but by thousands. Raymund, in his Legend (Bk. 2, ch. vii.), has described the extraordinary scenes at which he was present, although he has omitted to tell us when and where they took place; but the omission is supplied by the agreement of his account with that of other witnesses who have been more exact as to the time and locality. "Often," he says, "I have seen thousands of men and women hastening over the summit of the mountains and all the neighbouring country, as though summoned by the sound of some mysterious trumpet. They came to see and hear her: her words were not required, her presence alone sufficed to convert souls and inspire them with contrition. All wept over their sins, and accused themselves of them in the sacred tribunal of penance. I was witness to the sincerity of their repentance, and it was evident that an extraordinary and abundant grace acted on their hearts." The news of these things reaching the ears of Gregory XI., he granted to Raymund and his companions all the powers usually reserved to bishops for absolving those who presented themselves. Besides F. Raymund, F. Bartholomew Dominic, and F. Thomas della Fonte, four other confessors were employed, and several other priests were afterwards called to assist; but even so, they could

not supply the necessities of the people. For many continuous days they were occupied from dawn till nightfall, not having, like the Apostles, time so much as to eat. "I confess, to my shame," says Raymund, "that I was often tired and discouraged. But Catherine never interrupted her prayers, rejoicing in gaining so many souls to God, and only charging those who were with her to have a care for us who held the nets she knew so well how to fill. It is impossible to depict her joy; and what we saw in her filled us with such consolation that we forgot our own fatigue."

From St. Anthimo she returned to Rocca, where they were joined by F. Thomas Caffarini. Here the same scenes continued, as he testifies in his deposition. "I came," he says, "from Orvieto to a certain castle of the Salimbeni near Siena, where the virgin then was, and spent some time with her, witnessing the wonderful fruit both of souls and bodies which our Lord wrought by her. I saw how great a number were brought by her to salutary penance, some of whom had spent forty years or more without confession, others brought to make peace, and others delivered from the power of the devil. The lady of the castle, Donna Bianchina, of the noble house of Foligno, was accustomed to say that never had she conversed with any one like her. In my journey thither I had been threatened by many dangers from thieves and other things, all which I and my companions escaped in a manner altogether miraculous, so that we doubted not we must attribute our safety to her prayers."

Peter Ventura in his deposition tells us of one instance in which her exhortations to penance were without success. "While still at Rocca," he says, "she warned a certain man that unless he repented and confessed, he would that night find himself in a place whence he would not be able to get out and return to her. The man went that night to Montalcino, where he was seized and taken to Siena, and there shortly after beheaded."

Meanwhile Catherine's unusually long absence from Siena was exciting complaints among those of her disciples whom she left behind, and in addition to her other labours she had to appease their unreasonable discontent. She writes to Catherine of the

Hospital and Jane di Capo, two of her familiar disciples, whom she had left in charge of her spiritual family: "I know, my dearest daughters, that you are afflicted at my absence, but love and obedience will dissipate your grief. . . . What you have not yet done, do now, otherwise you will seriously afflict me. We must do, as the Apostles did when they had received the Holy Spirit; they separated from each other, and from their sweet Mother Mary. We may well believe that their only happiness was to live all together, and yet they renounced that happiness, in order to seek the honour of God and the salvation of souls; and when Mary their Mother left them, they did not think her love for them had diminished, or that they were forgotten by her. This must be the rule for us to follow. I know my presence is a consolation to you, but for God's honour and the salvation of souls you ought not to seek your own consolation, and so give an advantage to the devil, who will try and make you believe you have lost my affection. I assure you, I only love you all for God; why, then, feel such unreasonable pain at what cannot be helped? How shall we behave on great occasions, if we are so weak in little ones? God unites us, and He separates us, as He sees fit. He wills just now that we should all be separated for His honour. See now; *you* are at Siena, Cecca and Nonna at Montepulciano; F. Bartholomew and F. Matthew have gone to join you, and will stay at Siena; Alexia and Sister Bruno are at Monte Giove, about eighteen miles from Montepulciano—they are staying there with the Countess and Donna Isa; F. Raymund, F. Thomas, Sister Thomma, Lisa, and myself are here at Rocca among the brigands; and we have so many incarnate demons to eat,[1] that F. Thomas pretends it gives him the stomach-ache, and nevertheless you cannot satisfy him; they relish it more and more, and are well rewarded for all their trouble. Pray God in His goodness to give them good morsels, very sweet, and very bitter. What more could you desire? Courage then, my daughters; make the sacrifice of your wills to God, and do not always be crying for the milk of babes

[1] St. Catherine's favourite expression of "eating souls," on the table of the Holy Cross signifies, of course, their conversion.

when you ought, with the teeth of holy desire, to be chewing hard bread. Courage! we shall return as soon as we can, according to God's good pleasure."

Catherine was not teaching more than she herself was called on to practise. At this very time, the service of the Church was demanding of her a sacrifice than which none could be more costly. Raymund of Capua was summoned to Rome by Gregory XI., and while there, was for the second time elected Prior of the Minerva; in consequence of which he was unable to rejoin the Saint, and though he retained the title of her confessor, and directed her conscience by letter, they never met again in this world save for ten brief days. A letter written by her to Alexia at this time reveals something of what was passing in her soul, and contrasts singularly with the joyous playfulness of the one just quoted. Alexia, as we have just seen, was at Monte Giove, for the Saint seems to have sent her disciples in various directions, to complete and carry out the different missions of peace in which she was engaged. After giving Alexia some good advice as to her conduct she says, "Try particularly to accustom your tongue to silence; I think I have observed that your companion does not keep it very well, and that is a great grief to me. . . . You ask if I am suffering, and if I feel my usual infirmities. God provides for all, both as to the soul and body, and He has provided very well during this Advent, assuaging my suffering by letters. It is true I have suffered more than usual, but on the other hand, Lisa was cured at the same time as Fra Santi, who seemed at the point of death. It seems as if our sweet Spouse wished to give me experience both as to the interior and exterior, as to things that are seen, and things that are not seen . . . I am content that pain should be my food, and tears my drink, and sweat my perfume. Yes, let pain be my food, let pain be my medicine, let pain give me light, let pain strip me of all self-love, temporal and spiritual. The suffering I have experienced from the loss of all consolation from creatures has reminded me of my want of virtue, and made me know my own imperfection. He has not withdrawn His mercy from me, in spite of my ingratitude.

. . . Rejoice, then, on the Cross with me, for the Cross is the bed and the table of the soul, whereon she rests and takes her nourishment, even the fruit of patience in peace and repose . . . I am here on an island where the wind blows from all quarters. Rejoice in our Jesus; it is He who keeps us far, one from the other." (Letter 178.) The "island" she here speaks of is the "Isola della Rocca," so called apparently from its detached position. It is evident that the cross which here appears to be weighing on the Saint, by her so generously embraced, and the loss of consolation from creatures, was none other than her separation from Raymund.

But other crosses had to be borne, and among them the one most heavily felt from its injustice, namely, fresh murmurs and suspicions on the part of her fellow-citizens, who began to entertain unworthy doubts of her motives in remaining so many months in the territories of the Salimbeni. Lapa also had set out to join her daughter, but had not got farther than Montepulciano, whence she despatched her complaints to Catherine, who writes a letter conjointly to her and Cecca, who was still a guest of the Community; and who seems in some degree to have shared in the impatience of her companion. "My dear mother and daughter," writes Catherine, "I wish I could see you both on fire with charity, otherwise you will always be suffering, and make me suffer likewise. Dearest mother, your miserable child is in this world only for one thing, and that is to do the will of her Creator. I do beg of you, if I remain here longer than you like, do not be vexed. I really cannot do otherwise, and I am persuaded if you knew the whole business, you would be the first to tell me to remain. I am here to remedy a great scandal, if I can: it is no fault of the Countess. Pray to God and Our Lady that we may succeed. And as to you, Cecca and Justina,[1] this is the moment to show your virtue. Adieu." Catherine replied in a different strain to the citizens of Siena. It is thus that she expresses herself in writing to Salvi, a goldsmith, and a person of civic authority. "It seems that some who call themselves the

[1] Justina was Cecca's daughter and a nun at Montepulciano.

sons of God have taken scandal, being deluded by the devil, who is always prowling about, seeking how he can tear up the good grain sown by the Holy Spirit. The imprudent have not resisted, and under pretext of virtue have communicated what they felt to others. Now, then, I declare to you that it is the will of God I should remain here. I had a great desire not to offend Him by remaining, on account of the murmurs and suspicions of which I am the object, as well as my spiritual Father, F. Raymund. But He Who is Truth itself, reassured me saying, 'Continue to take thy food at the table where I have placed thee. I have placed thee at the table of the Cross, that in the midst of murmurs and sufferings thou mightest work for the salvation of souls; and I have confided to thee souls in this place, that they might be delivered out of the hands of the devil, and reconciled with Me, and with their neighbour. Finish, therefore, what thou hast begun. It is to hinder so much good that the enemy stirs up so much evil, but go on and fear nothing, for I will be on thy side.' These words restored my peace, and I applied myself with the more zeal to work for God's honour, the salvation of souls, and the good of our city. Negligently as I do it, yet I rejoice to follow the footsteps of my Creator. I do my fellow-citizens good, and they return me evil; I labour for their honour, and they cover me with reproaches; I desire their life, they desire my death: but death is our life, and shame our true glory; the real shame is for them who offend; where there is no fault, there need be no shame. I trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, and not in man. I shall continue therefore, and if they heap on me abuse and persecution, I shall repay them with tears and prayers, if God give me grace. Whether the devil likes it or not, I shall spend my life for God's honour and the salvation of souls, for the entire world, and above all, for my country. What a shame for the citizens of Siena to believe and imagine that we are occupied with affairs of state, either on the hands of the Salimbeni or elsewhere! My fellow-citizens are like Caiaphas who prophesied that one should die for the people, not knowing what he said. They believe that I and my companions are busy with plots, and they

say truly, and prophesy as he did, not knowing what they say. We *are* plotting; we seek to triumph over the devil and take away his power, to root hatred out of all hearts, and reconcile them with God and their neighbours. These are our plots, into which I drag every one who is with me. I only complain of their negligence; we work too lazily at our business; pray to God that we may have greater zeal. For the rest, the disciple is not greater than his Master. Brother Raymund, poor calumniated Brother Raymund, recommends himself to you, and asks you to pray for him, that he may be good and patient. Adieu."

But even this was not all. In the letter to Catherine of the Hospital, quoted a few pages back, it will be remembered that she speaks of F. Matthew having gone back to Siena. This was Matthew Tolomei, a Friar Preacher, the younger brother to Francesco and Ghinocchia, and to that "Master James" who, through his young brother's persuasion, visited Catherine, and was by her converted. Their mother, Donna Rabes Tolomei, was a noble and virtuous lady, and a great friend and disciple of Catherine's. But even good persons are not always proof against the spirit of the world, and in the fourteenth century family feuds carried away many a soul otherwise eminently virtuous. The Tolomei, as we know, had long been the mortal enemies of the Salimbeni. The two families headed the rival factions of the republic, and were the Capulets and Montagues of Siena. It is therefore easy to understand how it came about that Donna Rabes lost both patience and common sense when she saw her son borne away with the other disciples of Catherine, and abiding for four long months in the territory of their hereditary enemy. She therefore addressed a letter to the Saint, which is not preserved, but we can gather its tenor from Catherine's reply. (Letter 344.)

"My dearest daughter, I wish you would conquer your sensitive self-love which takes from you the light of reason, and makes you love the world and your children beyond measure. I wish I could see you dead to yourself; but it seems to me that you are very much alive, and I see by the letter you have written that

your blind love makes you quite depart from the order of God. You tell me that Francesca is ill, and that you must have Matthew return at once, spite of every obstacle; and that if he does not return, you will give him your malediction; and that if there is no other way for him to return, he is to take a peasant to accompany him. You cannot surely excuse such foolish impatience. Let us judge the matter not merely according to religious rules, but simply according to common-sense, such as we may get from nature; if you had any, you would not act as you do. If it be necessary, in order to satisfy you and your daughter, that Matthew must return, you must ask for two friars to be sent, one to go back with him, and the other to stay here, for you know very well they can none of them come or go alone. But passion blinds you, and your ears are filled with murmurs. You should have closed your ears, both you and the others, and held your tongues, so as not to hear what was said, and not to repeat it. Let there be an end of it all, and encourage Francesca to abide in the sweet love of God." Rabes, however, had her will, and Catherine, to content her, was forced to send back Matthew in company with F. Bartholomew, thus parting from one of her chief supports at a very difficult crisis.

The simplicity and natural style of the letters above quoted will be manifest to every reader. They might be written by one of ourselves, and apply as aptly to any of our own wants or infirmities as they did to those of Cecca, or Rabes Tolomei. We see by them that our Seraphic Mother was not merely the inspired prophetess raised into a region of ecstasy and vision, far above out of the reach of our sympathies and comprehension. She was a woman of like nature and passions as ourselves: she could speak our language and think our thoughts. Over her great soul there passed the same lights and shadows which chequer our little lives; and the playful gaiety of to-day is exchanged to-morrow for the sadder tone of suffering or of reproof. And yet that other life of miraculous power and of Divine favours went on all the while; never for one moment was it interrupted; never was her power with God exhibited on a more marvellous

scale. It was at Rocca, as we have seen, that those many cases occurred when the devil was cast out of those whom he tormented by the word and presence of the Saint; it was at Rocca that Francesco Malevolti and many other witnesses beheld the wonders that attended her daily Communions. "I often saw her communicate," says Malevolti, "and always in ecstasy; and I beheld how, when the priest was about to give her the Body of our Lord, before he had drawn more than a palm's length near her, the Sacred Host would depart out of his hands, and like an arrow, shoot into the mouth of the holy virgin. A wise man named Anastasius of Monte Altino, also took notice of this wonderful circumstance, and introduced it into certain rhythmical verses which he composed on things appertaining to her, which he had heard and personally seen." It was at Rocca that the same witness beheld her "times innumerable," raised from the ground in ecstasy as she prayed, and remaining thus suspended in the air more than a cubit above the ground. "I, and some others," he says, "wished to make proof of this; wherefore, passing our hands between her and the floor, we satisfied ourselves that it was true, and that she was altogether lifted up from the ground.[1] Moreover, so long as I remained with her at that time, I saw that she lived on Holy Communion alone, and that no bodily food of any sort would remain within her. . . . I was with her during the whole of that time, both at Montepulciano and St. Anthimo, and in the territories of the Salimbeni, and never did I hear a vain or idle word proceed forth out of her lips."

But one great event of Catherine's residence at Rocca yet remains to be told. It was here, as we know from her own words in a letter written to Raymund, which shall presently be quoted, that *she was miraculously taught to write.* "It chanced by some accident," says Caffarini,[2] "that there fell into her hands one day a certain vessel filled with cinnabar, or *minium*, which a writer

[1] We read in the Process (fol. 83) that a certain nobleman having resolved to ascertain how high the Saint was raised at these times, found that there was space enough between her and the ground for him to pass under.

[2] Sup., Part 1, Trat. 1, § 10.

had made use of to write in red, or rather to illuminate the initial letters of a book, according to the custom of the time. The Saint, moved by Divine inspiration, sat down, and taking the artist's pen in hand, though she had never learnt to form letters, or to compose words in regular metre, she wrote, in clear and distinct characters, the following verses:

'Spirito Santo, vieni nel mio cuore,
Per la tua potenza tiralo a te Dio,
Concedemi carità e timore;
Custodiscimi Cristo da ogni mal pensiero,
Infiammami, e riscaldami del tuo dulcissimo amore,
Acciò ogni travaglio mi sembri leggiero;
Assistenza chiedo, ed ajuto nelle necessità.
Cristo Amore. Cristo Amore.'"

He testifies to the same fact in his deposition, and affirms that he had seen the paper written in cinnabar, which was kept as a precious relic by F. Jerome of Siena (of the Hermits of St. Augustine), and which was given by him after the Saint's death as a gift of inestimable value to Leonard Pisani, who generously bestowed it on Caffarini; and by him it was laid up with other relics of the Saint in the convent of the Sisters of Penance at Venice. Gigli made every search for the precious original, but unhappily without success. Caffarini concludes his narrative with these words, "In one of her letters to Master Raymund she tells him of the manner in which she learnt to write, which was altogether beyond the course of nature, St. John and St. Thomas Aquinas being her masters, as she attests."

We will now turn to two of the Saint's letters to Raymund, both, as we gather, written by her own hand. The first is No. 89 in Gigli's collection. It is of singular beauty, overflowing with a strain of exquisite poetry. "The soul," she says, "cannot see herself *in* herself, she can only see herself in God. She finds in Him the image of the creature, and Him in His image. She desires to love *herself* in God, and God in herself, as one who sees his image reflected in a fountain, and rejoices to see it; but if he is wise, loves the fountain better than the image reflected

there. We can never see ourselves and the faults which disfigure the beauty of our souls unless we look into the peaceful mirror of the Divine Essence where we are represented. . . . Let us not separate, then, from our Crucified Jesus; He is the wall over which we must lean in order to gaze at our reflection in the fountain." And as we read the words, we almost seem to guess that in one of her expeditions along those mountain paths watered by the streams that descend into the Orcia, Catherine must so have stood, leaning over a wall, and gazing at her reflection in the crystal waters; and that the image thus imprinted on her memory associated itself with the thought of her Lord, never absent from her mind, and reproduced itself in the page before her. She continues: "You tell me to rejoice and be glad, and you have sent me good news, which has indeed filled me with joy. *The day after you left me* the Sweet Truth wished to do for me what the father does for his child, and the spouse for the spouse; he cannot bear that she should have any sorrow, but always finds some new way of filling her with joy." Then she speaks of certain wonderful things that had passed in her soul, and of the assaults of the enemy. "I rose, desiring to make confession to you, but the Divine Goodness no longer gave me what I asked. *I asked for you, and God gave me Himself*, granting me absolution of all my sins, and reminding me of all the lessons He had given me in other days." . . . She concludes this letter in a less exalted strain. "I must give you news of my good Father Thomas,[1] whose virtue, thank God, has triumphed over the enemy. He has become quite another man to what he was. I beg of you, write to him sometimes. Rejoice with me, for all my lost children have been found and restored to the sheepfold; they have quitted the darkness, and now nothing hinders the fulfilment of my wishes." In this letter nothing is said of the Saint's newly-acquired gift, but it is evidently written just after Raymund's departure, to which it refers. The next letter (Letter 90) is a long spiritual treatise, as it were the first rough draft of the Dialogue she shortly after composed. It concludes thus: "This letter and

[1] After Raymund's departure, F. Thomas again acted as her confessor.

another I have sent you (*i.e.*, the one last quoted) *I have written with my own hand in the Island of Rocca*, in the midst of sighs and so many tears, that I could not see out of my eyes. But I was full of admiration at the goodness of God and the marvels of His Providence in my regard. As my ignorance deprived me of the comfort of trusting any one, He gave me the faculty of being able to write, so that on returning from my ecstasy I might relieve my heart a little, and so prevent its bursting. He would not yet take me out of this life, and He has miraculously given me this power, as a master teaches the child for whom he sets a copy. As soon as he left me with St. John and St. Thomas Aquinas, I began to learn like one asleep. Pardon me for writing at such length, but my hand and my tongue would needs agree with my heart."

Neither of these two letters, however, was actually the first that she wrote. That was addressed to Stephen Maconi, and has unhappily been lost. Caffarini tells us this in his deposition, and also in the Supplement. "The Saint," he says, "learnt to write miraculously. One day, coming out of prayer, she wrote to Stephen Maconi a letter which ended thus, 'Know, my dear son, *that this is the first letter I have written with my own hand.*' Stephen assured me that she afterwards wrote several others, and that many pages of her book which she composed were written by her. Many of her autographs are preserved in the Chartreuse of Pontignano, near Siena."

Before leaving Rocca we must notice one other subject which has left its traces in the records of this time. We have said that Neri di Landoccio was one of those who accompanied Catherine to the castle of the Salimbeni. While there, he received two sad and terrible letters, the contents of which could not but make a profound impression on his sensitive heart. In order to explain these letters we must unfold a melancholy page in the history of St. Catherine and her spiritual family. In the midst of that group of chosen and innocent souls there was, as there had been in the company of the Apostles, an apostate—we do not know his name, for it has been carefully effaced from all records. Raymund,

indeed, has told us in the Legend, the miserable story of one unhappy man who, moved by a strange malice against the holy virgin, had kicked her, cast her out of the church doors, and even attempted her life, and who a few days later was seized with frenzy and tried to commit suicide. His friends, believing his senses were gone, watched him carefully, but as he grew calmer, released their vigilance; when, escaping from their hands, he hung himself like a second Judas. This story simply reads like the account of a maniac, and we should so regard it but for the precise narrative given at length by the author of the *Miracoli*, which reveals the fact that the unhappy man was one of the Friars, who first resorted to Catherine, attracted by her holy conversation, but in process of time conceived for her a profane affection. "But she persevering in her holy life, and showing herself an utter stranger to all such sentiments, his love turned to hatred, and in his mad passion he tried to kill her in the public church, when her life was saved by a man who chanced to be present. Wherefore a few days later this man left the Order, cast off the habit of religion, and returning to his home in a village near Siena, lived there almost in despair. Catherine knew of his departure out of the Order, and always prayed God to have mercy on his soul. But at last the unhappy man, persevering in his despair, hanged himself."

The two accounts differ in several important particulars; nevertheless, it would seem most probable that they refer to the same person. And there can be little doubt that the miserable apostate, "living in his own home, almost in despair," after having once been numbered among those who listened with innocent admiration to the teaching of the Saint, must have been the writer of the two letters addressed to Neri, which he received at Rocca, and which we are now about to quote.

1.—*From F. S. to Neri di Landoccio de' Paglieresi.*

DEAREST BROTHER,—I heard how you were from Gabriel, who came to me and gave me many messages of comfort from you; for which cause and because of your extreme importunity I write; not that I had any wish to do so, yet I am moved to write in reply

to your many salutations. I marvel how you can so much as remember a wretch like me, for God knows I am become a vessel of contumely, no longer exhaling the sweet odour on which in old times I was nourished: but now I am cast out of every good way. But know that if it were with me now as in the happy old times we once had together, I could not refrain from often writing to you. But as it is, I am ashamed to write either to you or to any friend or servant of God, considering my utter misery. God preserve you in His grace, you and your Mother. F. S.

"To Neri di Landoccio, at Rocca."

2.—*From the Same to the Same.*

"To Neri, my dearest Brother, of all the friends and servants of God—

"Although you have many times sent to me, saluting and trying to comfort me, who was once your brother, both in the common life we led together and in the bonds of charity, yet now for a long time past I have been cut off, and extinguished, and blotted out of the book where once I dwelt so sweetly; for which cause I no longer number myself as a brother among you and your dear friends and brethren. Wonder not, therefore, that I have not written, or if I never write again, until I return to gather the fruit of obedience and patience and humility. But I have wandered so far out of the right way that I count it almost a thing impossible that I should ever return and feed in the old pastures, and find a place of rest. And this has come upon me, because I shut fast in darkness the eye of my understanding, and cast the light out of my soul. So I am driven from the table, and I know myself to be clothed in darkness. No hunger or desire of good is left in me any more. I make neither beginning nor end to this letter, for there is none in me. Neither will I put my name to it, for I know not if I have a name. God grant *you* perseverance, and a good end."[1]

These are indeed terrible letters, and give us a glimpse into a melancholy history. It was probably the one dark spot in

[1] Lettere dei discepoli di Santo Caterina, No. 7 and 8.

Catherine's memory; and if, as we can hardly doubt, she read these letters, they must have had their part in the sadness which clouded the last days of her stay at Rocca. If the writer had really at one time been of the number of Catherine's disciples, how are we to reconcile this fact with the promise which we are told she had received from our Lord, that all her spiritual children should persevere to the end? The probable answer to this difficulty is, that the promise was given after, or even on the occasion of this one apostasy. Or again, we may understand it by recalling our Lord's words in the Gospels: "Of them whom Thou hast given Me I have lost none," as compared with those other words: "None of them is lost, save the son of perdition." "She always prayed for him," says the author just quoted. But did she ever allude to his fall, or make any personal effort to reclaim him? In reply to the first inquiry we may turn to one of her letters to Neri, in which she is striving to rouse him from the sadness and discouragement which so often beset him. "My dearest son," she says, "I write to you in the Precious Blood, desiring to see you grow in virtue until you reach the ocean of peace where you may never more fear to be separated from God. Then the evil law of corruption which is ever fighting against the spirit will be destroyed, and the debt will be paid. So long as you are in this world, my sweet son, you must try and live dead to self-will, and so you will conquer the law of our evil will. *You need not fear that God will permit that to happen to you which He has permitted to happen to others;* and you will not afflict yourself any more because you are for a short time separated from me and from the others. Courage, and remember what the Truth has said, that not one shall be snatched out of His hands-I say *His* hands, for all belong to Him, and I know you will understand me without many words. Adieu."

We know from Christofano di Gano that Catherine had received the promise from our Lord that none of her disciples should perish; but in her exquisite humility whilst referring to it here, she so expresses herself as to speak of them as rather His disciples than hers: "not one shall be snatched out of *His* hands,

for all belong to Him." The idea suggests itself that this promise was probably given her at a time when she was mourning the fall of this one soul; that she had been given to understand that none of the others who called her mother should ever be separated from the bond of charity, and that, therefore, having received such a promise, she was able to assure Neri that what had happened to this one soul should never happen to him. The fact of this passage occurring in a letter to Neri, rather than to any of her other spiritual children, increases the probability that she is here alluding to the unhappy apostate, towards whom he had shown so persevering a charity, and who even in his gloomy despair still kept up some intercourse with him. That she herself held any communication with him is extremely doubtful, though among her letters is one addressed "To a religious who had quitted his Order;" and it is barely possible that this may have been the person in question.

Catherine returned to Siena some time in the winter: probably in the January of 1378, for as we have seen by her letter to Alexia she had spent the whole of Advent at Rocca. She did not long enjoy the quiet of home, for circumstances were already preparing the way for that second mission to Florence, in the course of which she showed herself ready to lay down her life in very deed for the cause of peace and reconciliation. But of this we shall have to speak in another chapter.

ST. CATHERINE IN THE GARDEN

CHAPTER V

Catherine's Second Embassy to Florence

JANUARY TO AUGUST, 1378

RAYMUND of Capua's presence in Rome, whither we have seen him summoned whilst Catherine was still at Rocca, was destined to produce some important and unexpected results. He has related all the circumstances in his Legend with that unpretentious simplicity which characterises his entire narrative.

"Before quitting Tuscany," he says, "I held an interview with Nicolas Soderini, a citizen of Florence, a man most faithful to God and the Church, and strongly attached to Catherine; we

spoke of the affairs of the republic, and in particular of the ill-will of those who pretended to desire reconciliation with the Church, but who did all they could to prevent peace. As I complained of this course of conduct, that excellent man answered me thus: 'Be convinced that the people of Florence and every honest man in the town desire peace: it is only a few obstinate men by whom we are governed who offer obstacles.' I said: 'Could no remedy be applied to this evil?' He rejoined: 'Yes, it could be done, if some respectable citizens took to heart the cause of God, and had an understanding with the Guelphs, in order to deprive those intermeddlers of their power, for they are enemies of the public good, and it would be sufficient to remove four or five of them.' When I went to fulfil my commission to the Sovereign Pontiff, I related to him the conversation which I had held with Nicolas Soderini.

"I had been occupied several months in fulfilling my charge of Prior, and announcing the Word of God, when one Sunday morning a messenger from the Pope came to inform me that his Holiness awaited my presence at dinner. I obeyed this command, and after the repast the Holy Father said to me, 'I am told that if Catherine of Siena repairs to Florence, peace will be concluded.' I replied, 'Not only Catherine, but all of us are ready to obey your Holiness, and, if need be, to suffer martyrdom.' The Holy Father said to me: 'I do not wish that *you* should go to Florence, because they would maltreat you; but for *her*, she is a woman, and they have a great veneration for her; I do not think she would incur any danger. Consider the matter over, and what powers she would require; then bring them to-morrow morning for my signature, so that the business may be concluded at once.' I obeyed, and forwarded the letters to the Saint, who submitted, and set out without delay." Never was an important affair more rapidly decided, and never has such an affair been more briefly chronicled. We are even disposed to think that on this as on other occasions, Raymund's memory failed him in the details, and that Catherine's departure for Florence did not take place as immediately as he represents. That a letter was sent by Gregory

to Catherine while she was still at Rocca, may be gathered from one of her own to Raymund. (Letter 90.) In it she expresses her grief at all the miseries under which the Church was then groaning. "However," she continues, "after sorrow will come sweetness; that is the consolation I felt on receiving your letter and that of our sweet Father; for I had suffered much since St. Francis' day, and your letter drew me out of my sad thoughts." Whether in this letter Gregory had expressed his wish that the Saint should return to Florence, and whether her engagements at Rocca prevented her immediate compliance with this desire we cannot say; but it is certain that there was something in her conduct at this time which had displeased him, and drawn from him a sharp rebuke. Possessing as we do only one side of the correspondence, and that but imperfectly preserved, it is impossible to decide either the exact cause of his displeasure, or the terms in which he expressed it; but whatever they were, they pierced deep into Catherine's heart. In fact, Gregory at Rome was not the same man he had been at Avignon. The discontent of his French courtiers, the strangeness of the language, and the melancholy of the half-ruined city, which contrasted unfavourably enough with the brilliant capital he had left on the shores of the Rhone, weighed on his spirits, and made him feel daily more and more the difficulties of his position, while he lacked the brave heart that could have made head against them. Add to this his failing health and the disappointment he felt at the rejection by the Florentines of all his overtures for peace, and we shall understand that tinge of fretfulness which was apparent in his words towards the close of his life. Though ignorant of the cause of his displeasure with Catherine we have her reply; and we do not know our holy Mother—the sensitiveness of her heart, or the depths of her humility—until we have read that touching page in her correspondence. Let us remember who it is that writes; she whose dauntless courage had sustained the timidity of the Pontiff in more than one moment of trial, and to whose energy his return to Rome was mainly to be attributed. She does not address her letter to him, but to Raymund, whom she charges to stand by

the Pope and support him loyally to the last. "If you chance to find yourself in the presence of his Holiness, our sweet Father," she continues, "recommend me humbly to him and ask his pardon on my part for the many faults which I have committed by my ignorance and negligence. I fear it is my sins that are the cause of the persecution he suffers, and all the woes of the Church may justly be attributed to me. He has therefore good reason to complain of me, and to punish me for my faults; but tell him I will use every effort to correct myself and to obey him better. May God give him the grace to be courageous and never to turn back on account of any difficulty, or any persecution raised against him by his rebellious children; may he be firm and constant, not fearing labour, but casting himself like a lamb into the midst of those wolves, hungering only for God and for souls, and not troubling himself about temporal losses. If he acts thus, the lamb will become the master of the wolves, and the wolves will turn into lambs, and we shall see peace, and the good estate of Holy Church restored." Then changing her style and addressing herself directly to Gregory, she adds, "Ah! Holy Father, it was so you acted the first day you returned to your post; and now all these miseries have arisen because of me, from my lack of virtue, and my many faults of disobedience. But, Holy Father, see in the light of reason and truth what you have to reproach me with, not to punish, but to pity me. To whom can I turn if you abandon me? Who will help me, where will be my refuge, if you drive me away? My persecutors pursue me, and I take refuge with you, and with the other servants and children of God; and if you abandon me, and are irritated and angry with me, I can but hide myself in the Wounds of Jesus Crucified, Whose Vicar you are; and I know that He will receive me, because He desires not the death of a sinner. And when *He* has received me, surely *you* will not drive me away, and we shall still remain at our post, fighting generously for the Sweet Spouse of Christ. It is so that I desire to end my life in tears and sighs, giving my blood, if need be, yea, and the very marrow of my bones for her. And if all the world drive me away, I will not

torment myself, but will repose, weeping and suffering, on the bosom of the Sweet Spouse. Most Holy Father, pardon my ignorance and the many offences I commit against God and your Holiness. It is the Eternal Truth Who excuses me and reassures me whilst I humbly ask your benediction." And these, so far as we know, were her last written words to him who in old time she had addressed with a child's fondness as *Babbo mio dolce.* She concludes with a word to Raymund: "Dear Father, stand by his Holiness and be full of courage, and have no disquietude or servile fear. Be faithful to your cell, in presence of Mary and of the holy Cross; persevere in prayer and self-knowledge; be firm in faith, and willing to suffer, and then go on confidently and do all you can for God and for souls, until death." But Catherine's relations with Gregory XI. were not so to end. Perhaps she overrated the tenor of his words; and as often enough happens, the reproof which was felt so keenly by her who received it, had been forgotten by him who gave it almost before it reached her. Anyhow, Gregory still leant on her aid, and was impatient to employ it; and the necessary powers and instructions having been sent to her, she prepared to depart on the gravest and most difficult mission that had yet been entrusted to her.

Before leaving Siena, however, she prepared the way for her coming by a letter addressed to the Signoria of Florence (Letter 181), in which she goes over all the old arguments for peace and submission, and thus concludes: "Rise, then, and cast yourself into the arms of your Father, and he will receive you with goodness. If you do this you will have peace, both spiritual and temporal, and all Tuscany with you. The war will be turned against the infidels, and all will follow the standard of the holy Cross. But if you will not conclude peace, you and all Tuscany will have to suffer what none of your ancestors have ever yet suffered. I should greatly prefer speaking to writing to you. Believe me, I am ready to lay down my life itself if that were needed, and if thereby I could advance God's glory, or obtain your reconciliation with Holy Church." The event proved that

these were not empty words, and that in accepting this mission, she was in reality risking her life.

Catherine set out for Florence some time early in the year 1378. She travelled with several companions, among whom were Stephen Maconi, Christofano di Gano, Jane di Capo, and her mother Lapa. They found the city in a truly miserable state. For seventeen months the interdict had weighed on the inhabitants, nor can we in these days of cold faith fitly realise in what way the deprivation of all religious rites was then regarded by a believing population. And though Florence had exhibited a spirit of profanity and contempt of ecclesiastical authority, which seems to imply that the instincts of faith were not very keen among her citizens, the sentiments of the whole body must not be judged by the revolutionary excesses of a minority which had seized on the executive power. When first the terrible sentence had been fulminated, the intrepid Archbishop, Angelo di Ricasoli, quitted the city in order not to be compelled by violence to disobey the commands of the Pope. He thereby earned a word of sympathy and encouragement from Catherine. "I have heard," she writes, "of your firmness and noble conduct, and I beg of you, persevere in it to the end." But the Government seeing the great discontent felt by the people at the closing of the churches, and the suspension of all holy offices, feared lest in consequence they should insist on a policy of submission to the Holy See, which was of course the result aimed at by the infliction of the sentence. They therefore issued a decree setting the Pope's authority at defiance, and commanding all ecclesiastics to return to the city under penalty of a fine of 10,000 florins. Their intention was to enforce the non-observance of the interdict, and in fact it was openly violated in many places, an extremity of contempt which their own historian, Scipio Ammirato, is foremost to condemn.

On her arrival, Catherine was received, not as before in Soderini's own house, but in one which he had caused to be built expressly for her. Scipio Ammirato informs us of this fact. "Soderini," he says, "partly at his own expense, partly helped by the contributions of friends, built her a little house at the foot of St.

George's (hill), where she retired. Afterwards when his own house was burnt in the insurrection he took this house for his own residence." Some writers represent this house as built by Peter Canigiani, which probably means that he was one of those who contributed towards the expense.

A few days after her arrival at Florence, Catherine wrote to the Cardinal Peter de Luna, whom she had known at Avignon, and from whom better things might have been hoped than that he should eventually become the abettor of the schism, and accept the miserable dignity of Antipope. Catherine, who had quickly discerned the superior qualities of his mind, had trusted that he would prove a firm support to Gregory, who so greatly needed able councillors. "Things go badly here," she writes (Letter 25), "not to speak of seculars of whom there are many bad and few good, even priests and religious, specially among the Friars Minors, are found who outrage the truth even from their pulpits, saying that the interdict may be violated, and the offices celebrated with a free conscience, and that seculars who assist at them commit no sin. They have thus thrown the people into a confusion dreadful to think of." In fact, in the very month she came to Florence, the Government had obliged the priests to say Mass on the feast of St. Reparata, the patron Saint of the Cathedral, and not a few were found who did so willingly, and defended this act of contempt. Before this, the offices had been celebrated, but with closed doors; but after the return from Rome of the last envoys, sent thither to treat for peace, the Magistrates were so enraged at the rejection of their terms, that they determined on breaking with the Pope altogether, and ordered the churches to be thrown open, and all priests to take part in the violation of the interdict under severe penalties.

The first thing, then, that Catherine had to do, was to put a stop to this grave disorder. It was to little purpose to talk of making peace with the Pope so long as his lawful commands were being thus flagrantly disobeyed. She therefore lost no time, and on the very day of her arrival met the chiefs of the republic, in the halls of the Palazzo Vecchio, and made them

three orations, no doubt to three distinct bodies of Magistrates. We learn this fact from Stephen Maconi, in some valuable notes which he left in MS., and which were preserved in the monastery of Pontignano. "By the grace of God," he says, "such was her success that although before that they had broken the interdict and shown great contempt towards the Apostolic See, yet after hearing the exhortation of this holy virgin, they once more obeyed and observed it."

Here we may properly notice an interesting circumstance which illustrates the kind of effects which flowed from St. Catherine's influence and teaching. It has been said above that all the Florentines were certainly not partakers in the guilt of their rulers, and many exposed themselves to great obloquy on the part of the faction which was in power, in consequence of their firmness in adhering to the Pope's authority. In this they were supported and encouraged by St. Catherine's disciples, who were numerous in Florence, and who devised means for keeping up the piety of the people at the same time that they held them back from frequenting the forbidden Church offices. In the ancient chronicles of Manni we read that "the Florentines, being unable during the interdict to assist at the Church offices like good Catholics, began to make processions of secular persons, who went about singing lauds, and litanies, and other prayers; and with them went the Companies of the Disciplinati. Many other such Companies were also formed, of men, boys, and children; and other Companies for the express purpose of singing lauds and hymns at eventide in the churches of Florence, to do honour to God." The "lauds" here spoken of were not any part of the Divine Office, which could not be celebrated publicly, but certain devout hymns in the vernacular; nor is it a random conjecture that attributes the origin of these pious practices to Catherine's disciples, for some of these identical lauds have been preserved, and have lately been printed, their author being Giannozzo Sachetti, one of her devout followers, and a great friend of Peter and Ristoro Canigiani, as well as of Buonacorso di Lapo, and Nicolas Soderini; and his verses,

which are of high merit in a literary point of view, express in a poetical form the doctrine he had heard from the lips of the Saint.[1]

Stephen Maconi's words, which we have quoted above, were the testimony of an eye-witness. He accompanied the Saint into the halls of the Palazzo Vecchio, and stood by her side while she addressed the very men on whom, in the year previous, he had spent his own eloquence with so little fruit. What a scene was that! One woman facing with unconscious heroism the leaders of a revolution! We should have been glad to have known more of her "orations," and of the manner in which they were received, but nothing more is told us. However, we have two of her own letters of this date addressed to F. William Flete and to Alexia, who had not this time accompanied her to Florence.[2] To the first she says, "I think the first dawn of the Aurora is appearing and that our Lord is enlightening these people, and withdrawing them from the guilty darkness into which they had fallen, by enforcing the celebration of the Holy Mysteries. *Now, thank God, they observe the interdict*, and are beginning to return to the obedience of their Father. I beg of you, and of the Master (Tantucci), Brother Anthony, Brother Felix, and the rest, to pray earnestly that the Divine Goodness will send them the full sun of His mercy, that so peace may be made; that indeed would be a sweet and blessed Sun." Here she names the two objects of her mission—the observance of the interdict, and the restoration of peace. One brief hour of her inspired eloquence had already gained the first of these objects, and opened the way to the second; yet not a word in her announcement of the fact refers the success to herself. To Alexia she speaks in the same terms; you can see that the two letters were written on the

[1] The *lauds* of Sachetti were published at Naples in 1862 by Francesco Palermo, from a Florentine manuscript. The learned editor has enriched the publication with notes, showing the exact correspondence between the doctrine and language of his author and those of St. Catherine in various passages of the Dialogo. The identity of ideas and expression could hardly be more complete.

[2] Letters 126 and 181.

same day. "Now is the time to pray, for the dawn is appearing, and the sun will soon arise. The Aurora is come, and the darkness of mortal sin is being chased away. Those who celebrated and assisted at the holy offices do so no longer; and the interdict is observed in spite of those who seek to prevent it. Pray then that God may soon send peace, so that He may be glorified, and all evils cease, and that we may soon be together again to relate the wonderful works of God. Get special prayers said in all the monasteries, and ask our Prioress[1] to make all her daughters pray for peace, *for I shall not come back till that is gained.* Ask her also to pray for me, her poor daughter, that God may teach me to love Him, and that I may always be ready to speak the truth, and to die for it."

The interdict was then enforced, and this point being gained, Catherine next concentrated her efforts on the great question of peace. But here she encountered graver difficulties. We have already spoken of the extraordinary constitution of the Florentine government, made up of several distinct bodies of Magistrates, whose views and interests were often opposed. The "Eight of War," whose political existence depended on the maintenance of hostilities, were supported by the powerful family of the Ricci. On the other hand, there was another body called "the Captains of the Guelphs," the singular nature of whose authority requires a word of explanation. Florence, it must be remembered, was pre-eminently a Guelph city. She had somewhat departed from her Guelph traditions in declaring war against the Sovereign Pontiff, yet the dominant party still gloried in the name, and detested every Ghibelline as a kind of outcast. The Guelph party-spirit in Florence was one of actual fanaticism. When about to raise the great Palazzo of the republic, it was discovered that the architect had planned to place a portion of the edifice on the site formerly occupied by the Uberti palace. But the Uberti had been Ghibellines, and after their banishment from the

[1] *Our Prioress*, that is the Prioress of the Sisters of Penance in Siena. Catherine addressed a letter to her during her residence at Rocca. She was called Sister Nera di Gano, and her name is to be found in the Register.

city, the ground on which their palace stood was declared accursed. "Never shall our Palazzo stand on that unholy ground!" exclaimed the citizens; and in spite of the remonstrances of the architect, the plans were altered, and the palace deprived of its symmetrical proportions. The same uncompromising hatred to Ghibellines in every form or shape had led to the establishment of a body of officials, who were invested by a republic, jealous of its liberties, with powers which in their odious tyranny set all principles of freedom at defiance. "The Captains of the Guelphs" were chosen for the express purpose of excluding from every public office or employment any person suspected of entertaining Ghibelline opinions, or tainted in the most distant degree with Ghibelline blood. These formidable powers were, for the most part, entrusted to the hands of good and honest men—for example, Soderini and Peter Canigiani were of the number of those who had filled this office. They were naturally the advocates of peace, being of the party most attached to the Church, and opposed therefore to the policy of the "Eight of War." Catherine was introduced by Soderini to these Captains, and to many other good citizens, with whom she held long conferences, and soon succeeded in convincing them of the necessity of putting a stop to the existing state of things. "The chiefs of the Guelphs," says Raymund, "and a great many good citizens yielded to her persuasions, and demanded of the governors of the city that they should labour for peace, not by their words only, but also by deeds."

In the November of the previous year it had been agreed that a Congress for the pacification of Italy should meet at Sarzana, a city on the northern boundary of Tuscany, whither deputies should be sent from all the states united in the league against the Church, as well as from the Pope and the King of France, Bernabò Visconti acting as arbitrator. This important step was most unwelcome to the war party, and though they could not hinder the assembly of the Congress, they used every endeavour to render its deliberations fruitless. Their factious intrigues at last became so troublesome, that the necessity of some decisive

measure to check them was evident to all. Catherine pressed this on the Captains of the Guelphs, who had it in their power to restrain the excesses of the eight, owing to the singular nature of their official privileges. They were able to "warn," as it was called, those appointed to any public office; and if their warnings were neglected, they could proscribe the *Ammoniti* (or persons who had received the warnings), as convicted Ghibellines. It was an odious kind of ostracism, and had often been used as a mere pretext for crushing personal enemies. Soderini, in his conversation with Raymund, already quoted, had first suggested the removal from office of some of the war party, as affording the only reasonable hope of obtaining peace; and Catherine, following up this idea, endeavoured to persuade the Captains that instead of using their powers in order to punish suspected Ghibellines, they would do better to exclude those real enemies of the state who sought for selfish purposes to keep up the breach between the Father and his children. This advice appeared so valuable, that the Guelph Captains at once determined to put it in practice; nor was their determination to check the tyranny of the "Eight" at all weakened by the news which reached them towards the end of March 1378, of the death of Gregory XI. It is remarkable that no reference to this event is to be found in any of the letters of Catherine that are preserved. And although it broke up the Congress of Sarzana, and appeared therefore to ruin all the hopes of peace that had been built on that assembly, it in no way affected Catherine's mission at Florence. She had come with the firm resolution of staying until peace should have been made, and this resolution she kept, in spite of every discouragement.

Meanwhile the Captains of the Guelphs, supported by a great number of the citizens, had gone to the Priors of the city to demand that the peace negotiations should not be abandoned; and a little later, ventured on the bold step of using their powers to put out of office John Dino, one of the most conspicuous members of the "Eight of War." This first success emboldened them to follow up the blow with other "admonitions," and in

doing so, they unhappily suffered themselves to be guided, less by the patriotic desire of serving their country, than by that of satisfying their private resentments. An immense number of unoffending citizens found themselves made the victims of this proceeding, the whole odium of which was thrown on Catherine; for such was the prestige attaching to her name, that the Guelph Captains took pains to have it proclaimed as less the fruit of their councils than of her exhortations. The city was therefore in great agitation when, in the month of May, Silvestro de Medicis was elected Gonfalonier of Justice. He was a man of firmness and good repute, and he at once set himself to oppose the excesses of the Guelph party. They themselves hastened to make terms with him, and it was agreed, first, that no one should in future be "admonished" unless he were a notorious Ghibelline; and, secondly, that no one, whoever he might be, should have his name put to the vote for exclusion more than three times. Catherine had exerted herself actively to keep the Guelphs within bounds; so far was it from being true that she had exhorted them to make these reckless "admonitions," that she had severely blamed them, and we have the written evidence of Stephen Maconi to prove the fact. In one of the MS. notes left by him at Pontignano we read as follows: "I, Stephen Maconi, the unworthy writer, was at Florence at this time with Catherine, who ordered me, as well as others, to speak against the scandals which arose out of the 'admonitions,' in order that they might be remedied without delay. And I was actively occupied in this business, but without success." It is surmised that Catherine had exerted her influence over Silvestro to obtain his support in the cause of peace, and he certainly adhered to her policy in despatching fresh ambassadors to the newly-elected Pontiff, Urban VI., to reopen the negotiations.

Meanwhile, new elections had to be made of the Guelph Captains, for none of these offices were held for a longer term than two months at a time. The newly-elected captains were none of them disciples of the Saint. Capecelatro gives the names of all eight (from Marchione dei Stefani), and not one on the list

was in any way associated with her. They were some of the most fanatical members of their party, and instead of keeping to the rules that had been agreed on with the Gonfalonier, they recommenced the "admonitions," and not being able to obtain the exclusion of two citizens against whom they had a special grudge, after three scrutinies, they closed the palace doors, forbade any to quit the chamber, and continued to the twenty-third scrutiny, until they had obtained the vote they desired. This lawless proceeding put the whole city in a ferment; and on the 22nd of June, Silvestro, not finding himself strong enough to withstand the Captains alone, in a fatal moment excited the populace to rise in insurrection against them. The *Popolani* obeyed his invitation only too willingly, and the city was for some days in their hands, while scenes of frightful disorder were perpetrated. Naturally enough, the storm chiefly broke over the heads of the Guelph party and their Captains. Nicolas Soderini and Peter Canigiani were no longer in office, and had no part in the transactions which immediately led to this insurrection. But they had formerly been captains, and as such had "warned" many citizens; and they were therefore included among those against whom the fury of the *Popolani* was directed. Raymund says that many of the Guelphs and of their leaders had been already massacred, and their houses given up to pillage, when the cry arose to attack "the false traitor and hypocrite, Soderini, who thought of nothing but building a house for his blessed Catherine."[1] Soderini escaped, but his house was burnt and sacked, as was also that of Ristoro Canigiani, the son of Peter, and one of Catherine's most devoted disciples. Then the crowd, glutted with blood and pillage, and joined by a number of the lowest ruffians from the other side of the Arno, proposed to seek out Catherine herself, whom they represented as the author of the whole business, and against whom their leaders sought to direct their utmost violence. For it must be remembered the senseless and irrational passions of the multitude were being guided by the party headed by the "Eight of War," who were perfectly well aware that they had no

[1] Scip. Am. Lib., 14, p. 719.

firmer adversary to the continuance of their tyranny than the holy maid who was come to Florence exclusively on a mission of peace. We will relate the well-known story of what followed in the words of Raymund: "The leaders (of the revolt) pointed her out to the people, and everywhere was heard the cry, 'Let us take that wicked woman and burn her; let us cut her in pieces!' Then those who had given her shelter in their houses were afraid, and sent her away with all her companions. Catherine, conscious of her innocence, was perfectly tranquil, rejoicing to suffer in the cause of the Church. She encouraged those who were with her, and made them an exhortation, and then after the example of her Spouse, retired to a place where there was a garden, and began to pray.

"As she was praying in this garden, the followers of Satan came in great tumult, armed with swords and sticks, and crying, 'Where is that cursed woman, where is she?' Catherine heard them, and prepared for martyrdom as for a joyous feast. She rose, and went to meet one furious man who carried a sword, and cried louder than the rest, 'Where is Catherine?' Then kneeling humbly and joyfully before him, she said 'I am Catherine; in God's Name do to me whatever He may permit; but I charge you, do not touch any of my companions.' At these words the man appeared troubled, and so lost all power, that he could not so much as endure her presence; he wished her to depart, and said to her, 'Fly, I say, fly!' But she replied, 'I am very well where I am; where would you have me go? I am ready and willing to suffer for God and the Church, and I desire nothing better. If, therefore, you are charged to kill me, do so; I shall not resist, but let these go unharmed.' The man, however, withdrew confused, with all his companions. Catherine's children surrounded her, congratulating her on having escaped the hands of the ruffians; but she, full of sorrow, only wept, saying, 'Alas, how unhappy I am! I thought to-day that God would place the crown on my happiness. In His mercy He has granted me the white rose of virginity, and I had hoped He would add to it the red rose of martyrdom; but I am disappointed of my hope, and

doubtless it is my innumerable sins that are the cause!'" (Legend, Part 3, chap. viii.).

"Although the tumult was appeased, Catherine and her companions were not yet safe from danger. The terror which reigned in the city was so great that no one would receive her into their houses. Her friends advised her to return to Siena, but Catherine's lofty spirit refused so much as to entertain the thought. 'I have received the command of God to remain here,' she said, 'and never will I quit the territory of Florence until peace is restored between the Father and the children.' They dared not contradict her, and at last found an honest man who feared none but God, and who concealed her in his house. Some days later the excitement calmed down. Catherine was then taken out of the city, but not out of the territory of Florence, and retired with her disciples to a solitary place inhabited by hermits."

It is thus that Raymund relates this story in the sixth chapter of the third part of his Legend. In a former chapter (part 2, chap. iii.) he says that Catherine refused to leave the territory of Florence, because God had forbidden her to do so until peace was concluded between Florence and the Sovereign Pontiff. He does not name more particularly where the "solitary place inhabited by hermits" was, but it is always understood to have been Vallombrosa, where she had many friends. As she prepared to set out, Jane di Capo, one of the Mantellate who accompanied her, was found to be seriously unwell. Her foot was much swollen, and she had a violent fever, so that she was quite unfit to move. Catherine, not choosing to leave her alone, exposed to the ill treatment of the populace if she should chance to be recognised, had recourse to prayer; and very soon the invalid fell into a quiet sleep, from which she awoke perfectly cured, and able to set out with the rest.

It appears to have been from Vallombrosa that Catherine wrote the letter to Raymund in which she gives her own account of these events (Letter 96): "To-day," she says, "I wish to begin a new life, for I see clearly it has been through my fault that I have been deprived of the happiness of giving my life for

Jesus Crucified. I was consumed with the desire of suffering, and my heart was bursting with this desire, at once so sweet and so painful; sweet because I was united to the Word; and painful, because I saw God offended, and a multitude of demons that obscured all the city and darkened the minds of the people; and it seemed as if God had permitted them to do as they willed in order to punish sinners. I feared lest something might happen which would hinder the peace; but God and our sweet Lady have protected us, and in this tumult the only harm done has been to those who were executed by the hand of justice.

"But the desire I had to give my life for Christ was not heard. The Eternal Spouse of my soul has well disappointed me, as Christofano will tell you by word of mouth. And so I weep because my sins have prevented me giving my blood to obtain light for these blind souls; my blood has not reconciled the Father with His children; my blood has not cemented the stones of the mystical Body of the Church. It seemed as if the hands of him who wished to strike were bound. I said, 'Here I am, strike me, but let the others go their way;' and my words seemed to pierce their hearts like a dagger. Never could I tell you the happiness I felt at that moment. I felt so clearly what I owed to my Creator, that if I could have delivered my body to the flames, it seemed to me I should not sufficiently have acknowledged all the graces that I and my children have received. Oh, how happy I should have been if I could have given my blood for the love of the Blood, and for the salvation of souls! I will say no more on the subject, Christofano will tell you all about it. Only beg the Christ on earth (Urban VI.) not to delay the peace on account of what has happened. On the contrary, let him make all the more haste, that he may occupy himself with the great designs he has for the reformation of Holy Church; for these events have changed nothing, and now the city is quite quiet. Ask him to release me soon out of my prison, for until peace is made it is impossible for me to leave this place, and yet I long to go and taste the blood of the martyrs, and to visit his Holiness, and to see you once more, that I may tell you all the

wonderful things God has wrought in these past days, and that we all may rejoice together."

Here we see the visit to Rome already projected. One sentence above quoted deserves remark. Raymund in his narrative says that some of the Guelph party were slain by the mob. Catherine says no harm was done to any, except those *chi fece la Giustizia*, and Scipio Ammirato's history confirms the accuracy of her statement. The Magistrates sent soldiers into each quarter of the town with orders to hang the first five rioters who should fall into their hands, but to choose *foreigners* by preference; "and those who suffered," he adds, "were mostly Flemings."

Three other letters seem to have been written by Catherine from Vallombrosa. Nicolas Soderini accompanied her to that retreat, as did also Christofano di Gano; but the former returned to Florence, where he found his house burned and pillaged. Catherine wrote to him to console him for his losses. "It seems to me," she says, "that God in His great goodness is showing you His love of predilection by rendering you worthy of suffering something for Him; do not be impatient, therefore, or faint under His mighty hand. Later we shall receive in heaven the reward for all our losses, but only if we are patient. Be confirmed, then, in patience, that when you enter the holy city of Jerusalem you may, in the vision of peace, receive all that you have merited in this time of pilgrimage. Strengthen Donna Constanza in the name of Jesus; tell her to examine who has suffered most, and she will see that God will bring back calm by means of this tempest." Her letters to Peter Canigiani and his son Ristoro are in the same strain; to the latter she says, "Rejoice at what has happened, for it is the life of your soul. If sensuality and the language of the world says otherwise, do not listen to them, but be firm and courageous, and remember that worldly men cannot answer for you before the Supreme Judge at the moment of death, and that then your only help will be a good conscience."

In fact, both Soderini and the Canigiani incurred severe penalties for their share, real or supposed, in the late troubles. Soderini was exiled fifty miles from the city, Peter Canigiani was

fined 2000 gold florins, and his son Ristoro, who had been enrolled among the *Popolani*, was declared a *Grandee*, and even a *High Grandee* (Sopragrando), and as such, altogether ineligible to any office in the republic.

As soon as calm was restored, Catherine returned to the city, and thence addressed her first letter to Urban VI. The month of June was coming to a close, and Catherine had already heard of his projects of reform; perhaps also she had received hints to the effect that the zeal of the new Pontiff was not always tempered with discretion. Her letter begins by touching, in the gentlest possible manner, on the necessity of uniting justice with mercy. Then she says, "Most Holy Father, God has established you Pastor of His sheep throughout Christendom, and He has chosen you to dispense the Blood of Jesus, Whose Vicar you are, at a time when the iniquities of the faithful abound more than they ever did before, whether in the clergy or the whole body; therefore it is most necessary that you should be established in charity and justice. Be not disturbed at what the world may say; like a good Pastor reform with courage, root out vice, plant virtue, and be ready, if need be, to give your life. Most Holy Father, I see no other way of succeeding than by entirely renewing the garden of the Holy Church, and surrounding yourself with holy persons who will not fear death. Do not look to birth, provided they are good pastors. Create a college of good Cardinals, who will be as firm columns, and with God's grace will help you to support your burden." Then she passes on to the affairs of Florence. "I recommend to you all these poor sheep who are out of the sheepfold, doubtless because of my sins. For the sake of the Blood of which you are the minister, do not delay receiving them to mercy. Let your Holiness triumph over their hardness of heart, and bring them back to the sheepfold. If they do not ask it with perfect humility, yet supply for their weakness, and do not ask more of them than they have strength to perform. Have pity on the souls that perish; do not think of the scandals that have lately taken place in this city, where it seemed for a moment as if all the demons of hell had done

their utmost to hinder peace: but, through God's goodness, no great harm has come of it; and now all is quiet again, and your children ask of you the oil of mercy. We will grant that they do not ask it with all the suitable forms and sorrow of heart that you might desire; yet do not refuse them. Alas, *Babbo mio*, I do not wish to remain here any longer, nevertheless, do with me what you like, only grant me the favour that I ask of you, miserable as I am. Do not refuse me this little sweetmeat." (Letter 15.)

Whilst the result of this appeal was still uncertain, St. Catherine found a new object on which to expend her zeal. Florence was at that time the headquarters of the heretical sect of the Fraticelli, against whose errors and misdeeds it had often fallen to her lot to warn her disciples. They were pretended pietists, who under the cloak of devotion concealed an abandoned life, and endeavoured to propagate their false doctrines chiefly by insinuating themselves into the confidence of nuns, through the appearance of a sanctimonious rigour. They were particularly addicted to the profession of poverty, and on this account many other religious societies that embraced poverty had, in their beginnings (like the Gesuati), fallen under the suspicion of being tainted with their errors. We learn from Nicolas Manerbio in his addition to the Legend, and in the Proemio affixed to Gigli's second volume, that Catherine, when at Florence, publicly disputed with these heretics, and put them to silence, but no further particulars on this interesting subject have been preserved.

At last the object of her long prayers and labours was granted, and in the beginning of July the terms of peace between Florence and the Holy See were definitively agreed to. The city was to pay 150,000 gold florins, and everything was to return to the condition in which it was before the war. Even Talamon was not forgotten; and it was to be restored to Siena, though considerable delays attended the fulfilment of this condition, due at last to Catherine's personal exertions. This peace was signed at Florence towards the end of July 1378, and ratified at Rome in the October following. As one happy result, the city of Florence was released from the interdict, the Bishop of Volterra and F.

Francis Orvieto, an Augustinian hermit, being deputed by the Pope to absolve the citizens. This joyful event filled the heart of Catherine with inexpressible joy, and she thus announces the happy news to her children at Siena. She writes to Sano di Maco: "Oh, my dear son! God has heard the prayers of His servants who have so long cried to Him, and the long groanings they have uttered over His dead children! Now they have risen again, and returned from death to life, and from darkness to light. Yes, my dear sons, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the blind see, the dumb speak, and cry in a loud voice, 'Peace, peace!' Oh, what immense joy to see them return to the obedience of their Father! As those who begin to see, they say, 'Thanks be to Thee, O Lord, Who hast reconciled us with our Holy Father!' Yes, *he* is now called holy, the sweet Lamb, the Christ on earth, the same whom awhile ago they called heretic and *patarin*;[1] now they accept him for their Father whom hitherto they rejected. The clouds are dispersed, and the sky is once more serene. Rejoice then, my beloved children, rejoice, and shed sweet tears of gratitude before our Eternal Father; but do not yet be satisfied until the standard of the holy Cross is displayed, and that right soon. Rejoice, and be transported with joy in our Lord Jesus. Peace is made at last in spite of those who sought to hinder it. It was on Saturday evening that the Olive arrived, at one in the night, and to-day at vespers the other also came . . . I send you some of the Olive of peace."

Catherine's allusion to the "Olive of peace," is not a mere metaphor; in those days, at any rate in Italy, as Dante tells us, ambassadors of peace actually carried one as the symbol of their mission; and it was a real substantial olive branch which had gladdened her eyes that Saturday evening, and of which, it would seem, she sent a leaf as a welcome present to her Sienese children. Raymund, in relating the close of these events, dwells on the courageous firmness which St. Catherine displayed to the very end. When at last the peace was signed, she said to her spiritual children, "*Now*, we may quit Florence, for, by the grace

[1] *Paterin*, a kind of heretic; equivalent to Vaudois.

of my Saviour Jesus Christ, I have followed His commands and those of His Vicar; those whom I found revolted against the Church I leave subject to that sweet and tender Mother. Now, therefore, let us return to Siena."

She returned about the end of July or the beginning of August, for we have a letter written by her to Louisa di Grannello, dated "Siena, August 27, 1378." She brought with her from Florence one new disciple, who from that time until the day of her death never quitted her: it was Barduccio Canigiani, the younger brother of Ristoro, who had been a spiritual son of Don John of Vallombrosa, and who with the other followers of that holy man had adhered to Catherine throughout the whole of her troublesome residence at Florence. He now joined her "family," and acted as one of her secretaries. Raymund speaks of him as "a young Florentine, who had enriched his youth with the wisdom of age, and adorned it with all the virtues. They called him Barduccio. He left his parents, his brethren, and his country, to follow Catherine, and remained with her till her death. I have learnt since that the Saint had a special affection for him, and I think it was on account of his angelic purity, nor is it wonderful that a virgin soul should be dear to a virgin."

Here then we close this heroic chapter in the life of St. Catherine. To few women has such a moment been granted as that which saw her calmly facing the maddened mob who thirsted for her blood, more ready to give her life for the cause of God and the Church than they were to take it. To her deep sorrow she was denied "the red rose of martyrdom;" yet if ever there was one who merited to be regarded as a martyr in desire it was she, before whose kneeling form the cowardly ruffians shrank with terror, and who wept that she had not been counted worthy to die for the honour of her Lord. But she had gained the palm, if not of martyrdom, yet of victory. She had achieved the difficult mission entrusted to her, and made peace between the Father and the children, and there was no cloud to shadow the joy with which, for the last time in her life, she returned to her old home in her native city.

CHAPTER VI

The Monks of Vallombrosa and Monte Oliveto

IN the foregoing chapters the name of Don John of the Cells of Vallombrosa has more than once occurred in connection with various affairs in which St. Catherine took part; and it will be remembered that in our account of her last mission to Florence she is spoken of as having taken refuge in that celebrated sanctuary, when her life was threatened during the insurrection of the "Ammoniti." Not to interrupt the thread of our narrative we have abstained from many a tempting episode, but some account of this remarkable man must now be given, and of his valorous championship of her whom he was proud of denominating his spiritual Mother.

There is, perhaps, no example in the history of great penitents more remarkable than that of Don John of the Cells, who during the latter portion of his life was deservedly regarded as the Socrates of his country and a great luminary of the Church; yet whose earlier career was only remarkable for its extraordinary depravity. He was a Florentine of noble birth, and entering when young into the Order of Vallombrosa, he greatly distinguished himself as a man of letters, and became Superior of the Convent of the Holy Trinity, then existing within the city walls. But whilst still filling that office, he came to lead a life of the utmost iniquity, the long catalogue of his crimes including the practice of magic. The General of his Order caused him to be deposed and imprisoned for a year in a darksome dungeon. There, by a wonderful stroke of Divine grace, his heart became touched with true penance; and on his release, refusing to be

reinstated in his charge, he retired to a hermitage in the holy solitude of Vallombrosa. He did not take up his residence in the larger monastery, but in a small building which still stands on an insolated rock overlooking the deep wooded ravine, and bears the name of *Paradisino*, or of "the Cells;" from which last John received the surname by which he has become known to posterity. Here, then, he gave himself up to a life of prayer, study, and penance, and was soon as renowned for his austere sanctity as he had before been for his grievous excesses. He was not content with burying himself in his hermitage, and letting his name become effaced from the memory of men; he had the courage to expose himself to the notice of those who knew his history, and to endure their scorn and reproach, while devoting his great gifts to the cause of truth, and the salvation of souls. In the last chapter we have spoken of the *Fraticelli*, that pestilent sect of hypocrites whom Catherine, among her other good deeds, defeated and put to confusion. Don John also opposed a manful opposition to their errors, and succeeded in delivering many young men from their dangerous influence. Those who followed his direction he formed into a kind of devout society, not very unlike that which gathered around St. Catherine, and whom she called "her family." Living in the world, they withdrew from its follies and occupied themselves in good works; and people called them the *Spirituali*. Some persons were to be found who, confounding them with the very Fraticelli to whom they were opposed, came to regard them as hypocrites, and tainted with the same errors; but this was a gross calumny. Barduccio Canigiani, as has been already stated, began by being one of these disciples of John of the Cells; but after forming the acquaintance of St. Catherine, he enrolled himself among her spiritual sons, together with most of his companions, and headed by their venerable director himself.

When Catherine left Florence after her first visit, she wrote to Don John in affectionate confidence, begging him to have a watchful care over these young souls so dear to both of them. "I entreat you," she says, "take good care of your children and mine; provide for the needs of each one; and make them all as

perfect as you can." She also wrote a joint letter to the youths themselves, which is addressed, "To some young men of Florence, the adopted sons of Don John" (Letter 308), which reads as if written in reply to one asking her advice as to the choice of a state of life. She answers them with great tenderness and moderation, dwelling on the virtue of obedience, which she calls "the soul's best friend." "It is most easily practised," she says, "in some approved Order; and though it is true we see many relaxed religious who do not keep their rule, yet the rule itself is not the less good on that account, being inspired by the Holy Spirit. So if you think yourselves called by God to this state, answer His call, and do not be hindered by the consideration of those Orders which have fallen into tepidity and scandals. There are many monasteries where these abuses have been reformed. Among them I will specially recommend that of St. Anthimo; the abbot, as Don John will tell you, is the model of humility, charity, and poverty. May God guide you as is best for His glory and your own sanctification. Meanwhile, my children, be united together in the bonds of charity. Bear with each other's faults, for you know that was the sign which our Lord gave whereby we should know His true disciples. It will be a real consolation to me to hear that you are all united; let me be able to say with St. Paul that 'you are my joy and my crown.'"

How much Don John loved and reverenced St. Catherine will be apparent both from the open-hearted way in which he allowed his "adopted sons" to rank themselves as her disciples, and by the terms in which he wrote and spoke of her, both whilst living and after her death. Nevertheless, busy tongues did their best to cause a breach between them, and did actually raise a storm which is among the most curious episodes of St. Catherine's life. It has been said that at the time of her first introduction to Don John she was much taken up with the project of the Crusade. The letters she wrote, and the exhortations which she addressed to her friends on this subject, not only had the effect of gaining many to take the Cross, and promise effectual aid in men and money, but were likewise laid hold of by certain weak heads

among her female hearers, who loudly declared their intention of joining the Crusaders, and going across the seas, whether to fight the infidels or to convert them, does not very clearly appear. However, they made themselves ridiculous, and thought fit to quote the authority of Catherine in justification of their folly. The matter reached the ears of John of the Cells, and he addressed a letter to one of these devout ladies named Domitilla, in which he read her a lesson of common sense.[1] "I hear," he says, "that you, with many other virgins and youths, wish to go across the seas. A pious desire in the husk, no doubt, but the kernel is altogether bad, and proceeds from the enemy of the human race, who deceived Eve by an appearance of good, and drove her out of Paradise. Perhaps you will tell me that the holy virgin Catherine preaches that you should go across the seas. I reply, that if she advises you to do such a thing, because there you will find Christ, I deny it, with all the saints. In the first place, our Lord said that the kingdom of God is within." And after further expostulations with her, he continues, "If you are more disposed to trust your St. Catherine than the holy doctors, go to her, and ask her by what road she reached such perfection; she will tell you it was by the road of prayer and silence, for according to what is said of her, she kept silence three years, and always remained shut up in her room, praying. Do that first of all, and when you have attained a sanctity like hers, I will certainly give you permission to cross the seas."

It is evident that Don John had no intention by this letter to blame Catherine, but only to check the indiscretion of those who quoted her in support of the excesses of their own pious enthusiasm. But the rumour got abroad that he had severely condemned her, and reaching Lecceto, F. William Flete, of all persons in the world, took fire at the supposed affront to his venerated Mother, and addressed a most lively remonstrance to his brother solitary, which unfortunately is not preserved. However, we may judge of its character from Don John's replies, which are printed by Gigli at the end of the first volume of St. Catherine's letters. If

[1] The letter is printed in the *Lettere di Sancti e Beati Fiorentini*, No. xx.

F. William's contemplative soul was roused to indignation by the bare thought of Catherine having been calumniated, Don John was no less troubled at being supposed capable of uttering a word of blame against one whom he regarded with so much veneration. Monks were in those days prodigious letter-writters; they spared neither their words nor their figures of speech, and on this occasion the hermit of Vallombrosa condemned the hermit of Lecceto to the penance of reading two extremely long letters, of which we shall inflict on our readers no more than a few short extracts.

"To the Venerable Father, Brother William; Don John the sinner wishes health in Christ to your charity at the Oak of Mambre. O happy fault, to which such a corrector was granted, whom I have deserved to hear admonishing me after having so long desired to see him! I beg you to understand, my father, that I have never written any letter to the Venerable Catherine of Siena, nor have I ever been foolish enough to use rash or jesting language concerning the Spouse of Christ. I only wrote to a certain damsel at Florence, fearing she might expose herself to danger in her endeavours to convert the Saracens, and knowing how easily a weak woman may fall, I desired her to ask the blessed Catherine if she had found Christ by praying, or by gadding about. I hear that you have no great knowledge of our vulgar tongue, whence this error may easily have arisen. As to Catherine, I will make known to your piety what I feel about her in the innermost recesses of my heart. I consider her to be that angel who sounded the sixth trumpet." Then after some very singular adaptations of Holy Scripture, he continues: "I say all this that you may understand how much I love her, and everywhere praise her; and I beg of you to receive me as your son, since I understand that your will is her will, and her will yours. Now, I will tell you a secret. When she was in Florence,[1] it happened that being in an ecstasy she was seen by a certain virgin, who, quite beside herself with wonder, ran to her, and cutting off some of her hair wrapt it in a piece of silk which she had in her hand. I went to Florence about that time for certain business, and the

[1] That is, on the occasion of her first embassy.

damsel seeing my devotion to Catherine, gave me some of this hair as a precious treasure. I received it with joy, and placed it among my choicest relics, kissing it reverently, as if it belonged to a saint of Paradise."

Father William answered this letter in so friendly a way as to call forth from Don John a second, yet fuller of Scriptural quotations and protestations of fidelity to Catherine. In it he alludes to having received a letter from her, which is not preserved; but we gather that the Saint, hearing of the dispute which had arisen between her two good friends, had interfered to adjust their differences. Don John's second letter has the rare merit of bearing a date. It was written on the 10th of October 1376, just at the time when, as we have seen, Catherine was returning to Italy after her visit to Avignon. But if the rumours which had so roused the indignation of F. William had entailed some little annoyance on John of the Cells, Providence so ordered it that he had his revenge. Will it be believed that even among the Oaks of Lecceto a traitor could be found to asperse Catherine's reputation, and to circulate injurious criticisms of her conduct? We know nothing of him but his name and the castigation which he received: he was called John of Salerno; and Landucci, the historian of the Augustinian hermits, has very prudently told us nothing at all about him, whence it may be concluded he was not very eminent among his brethren. Still he had a tongue and a pen, and he seems to have used both for the purpose of representing Catherine as altogether unworthy of the praises so lavishly bestowed on her by the public. One would have thought he might safely have been trusted to the tender mercies of Prior John III. and Father William Flete. But Don John did not think so, or perhaps he was not sorry of the opportunity thus afforded him of turning the tables on his brother hermits. Lecceto had taken Vallombrosa to task for the very same misdemeanour, and it was now the time for Vallombrosa to return the debt with interest. So once more did John of the Cells draw his pen; and this time we are very glad he did so; for however contemptible an adversary John of Salerno may have been, the letter in which

Don John demolished him has preserved some very interesting facts regarding Catherine, which would not otherwise have come to our knowledge. We will quote the letter, therefore, with certain merciful abridgments. He begins by repudiating several most unjust charges brought against him by Brother John of Salerno, to the effect that he encouraged and corresponded with some of the heretical and excommunicated Fraticelli. After having defended himself at considerable length on this head, he goes on to notice the different points of the attack against Catherine. They were briefly, that she offered to do penance for the sins of others, that she allowed people to kiss her hands and feet, and that before she had been approved as a saint by the Church she ought not to be so extolled. Don John replies to each and all of these objections, and then bursts forth in a strain of that peculiar kind of eloquence fashionable in the fourteenth century. "But who am I who dare to touch this mountain of the Lord? *Montem coagulatum, Montem pinguem, Montem in quo beneplacitum est Deo habitare*, the burning mountain of Sinai, of which it is written, 'And if a beast touch this mountain, let him be stoned with stones!' Far from me be such stones! . . . You say that we ought not to venerate her till she has been approved by the Church. This I dispute not; yet only lately the Pope having sent for her, caused her to be prudently examined, and finding her just and holy, sent her back with many gifts and graces, so that we have not believed every spirit, but one that has been tried. You say that the city of Florence abounds in fools, and the city of Siena in fantastical persons. Pray, why do you leave out Pisa, Lucca, Genoa, and many other cities, in all which men have been seized with such admiration for her, and such innumerable crowds have run for her blessing, that she could only go through these cities secretly, and by night?" Then follows the narrative of her visit to Nurcia, already quoted, and he concludes with a eulogy on her admirable doctrine, declaring that the spirit of Paul seems verily to dwell in the body of Catherine.

John of the Cells was twice cured of dangerous sickness by the command, so to speak, of Catherine. He himself related all the

circumstances of his cure to Stephen Maconi, when lying in his agony at the Abbey of Passignano, near the lake of Thrasimene, about thirteen miles from Siena. This monastery was only second in repute to that of Vallombrosa, for it was the burial-place of the founder of the Order, St. John Gualbert, who died here in 1073, St. Catherine often visited this abbey, and had many disciples among its hermits. She corresponded in particular with Don Martin, the abbot, a great friend of John of the Cells. The manner of life followed by the religious did not greatly differ from that of the Carthusians. Each hermit occupied his own cell and cultivated his own little garden. So when Catherine writes to the Abbot Martin, she talks to him of the best way of cultivating the garden of our soul; how we must turn up the soil, and clear away the briars, and plant the virtues, and bring forth sweet flowers. "Fulfil my desires," she says, "and be a good gardener to your own soul and those of your brethren." In another letter she bids him graft himself on the Tree of the Cross. We must not be barren trees, grafted on the dead stock of this world, but living trees, grafted into the one fertile Tree, Jesus Christ. She writes as one to whom the woody solitudes of Vallombrosa and Passignano were familiar spots. And, indeed, she had seen with her own eyes the deep shadowy vale down which pours the torrent of the Ellero. She had walked under those dark pines, and listened to the music of the wind among their branches. She had beheld the same scenes which entranced the eyes of Milton—the mountains clothed to their summit with beech trees, the lawns and meadows which preserve a perpetual green from the countless streams with which they are watered, and the blossoms of a thousand hues which could not fail to delight the eye of such a lover of flowers as she was. Like him, too, she had watched the fall of those

> "Autumnal leaves that strew the brooks
> In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades,
> High over-arched, embower."

But whilst *he* retained the image in his mind, to liken it to the

fallen host of rebel angels, *she* carried away a memory of the gardens and meadows, the brooks and the luxuriant foliage, to weave it all into a beautiful picture—a parable of the order and loveliness of a faithful religious soul.

One other thing she had also in all probability seen, namely, the miraculous beech tree of Vallombrosa growing over the little cabin which served St. John Gualbert as his first place of retreat. This beech begins to put fourth its leaves before all the others in the forest, and retains them long after the foliage has fallen from every other bough. And the good monks (when there were such things at Vallombrosa, for in the late Revolution all have been swept away) used to make crosses out of the wood of this tree, which they distributed as objects of piety. Catherine had one of these crosses, which was given her by Abbot Martin of Passignano, and it was thus she thanked him for it: "You have sent me a cross, reverend Father; I shall value it more than any I have, and I am greatly touched by your having had the thought of sending it to me. You offer to the eyes of my body that which I ought ever to have present to the eyes of my soul, but unhappily, I do not do it. I earnestly beg you to pray to our sweet Lord that I may be entirely changed. I will return you cross for cross, inviting you to suffer that of holy desire and bodily suffering for the love of God and the salvation of souls." She wrote a very beautiful letter to the monks of Passignano in common, exhorting them to strict observance of their rule. "You know, my beloved sons," she says, "what sort of persons those monks are who do not follow their rule, but their own irregular desires, and who are weary their of obligations, and seek after the pleasures of the world, desiring its honours, riches, and distinctions which are the death of the soul, and should be the shame and disgrace of a religious. These are stinking flowers which shed forth no perfume, but an odour of infection. . . . The soul that loves prayer is a perfumed flower, and such a soul enjoys all the treasures which can be enjoyed in this life. My dear sons, look on yourselves as novices who have just entered the Order, that you may keep the rule with devotion. Since God has placed you among *angels*, do

not you seek to remain among *men;* I mean, by men, seculars who are called only to the common way; *but you are called to the perfect state, and if in it you are not perfect, you will be less than men, and you will descend to the level of irrational brutes.* So be faithful to your cell, love the choir, be obedient, fly conversation, and apply yourselves to watching and prayer." (Letter 69.) John of the Cells survived St. Catherine, and lived to extreme old age. He died, at length, worn out by his penances even more than by his years. The chroniclers of his Order speak of them as "something incredible, whereby his body was, as it were, broken to pieces." He is called by them "a second Socrates," "a beautiful soul," and he was honoured among his brethren, after death, with the title of "the Blessed."

Another religious body with whose members Catherine had very close relations, was the congregation of the Olivetan monks. The Olivetans might indeed be called a Sienese Order, having been founded in 1319 by the Blessed Bernard Tolomei and the Blessed Ambrose Piccolomini, members of the two illustrious families of Siena already often mentioned. Bernard was a learned doctor in the university, who, having become blind, was miraculously cured, and thenceforth renouncing the world, retired to a wild desert about sixteen miles to the south of the city, called Monte di Accona; and there building a little clay hut, he lived for a time with two friends, until the vision of a silver ladder reaching from earth to heaven, up which he saw the angels leading a company of white-robed monks, put it into his heart to found a religious Congregation. His design being approved by Pope John XXII., they took the Benedictine rule, and founded their first monastery in the same desert tract of country above spoken of. This monastery was erected on the hill of Monte di Accona, which thenceforth received the name of Monte Oliveto. Three other houses of the same Congregation were founded in the Sienese territory, which were all in a state of excellent discipline in St. Catherine's time, in this respect presenting a great and favourable contrast to other religious institutes. During the plague of 1348, Bernard and a considerable number of his monks left their

solitude and came into Siena to serve the plague-stricken, himself and eighty of his religious children falling victims to their devoted charity. Catherine was well acquainted both with the Olivetan monks and with their convents, specially with the Mother-house of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, spoken of above,[1] and with that of St. Benedict, situated nearer to the city, outside the Porta Tufi, where lay the body of the holy founder. No fewer than twelve of her letters are preserved, addressed, some to the General, some to the other superiors, and some to the novices, of whom several would seem to have been directed in their choice of this Congregation by her advice. Writing to the Prior of St. Benedict's, she says: "I send you two more sheep; give them the repose of their cells and of study. They are two whom you will have no difficulty in feeding, and they will give you much joy and consolation." In St. Catherine's time *study* formed no part of the life of these monks. She was pleading for an exception, which afterwards became the rule. One of the novices so recommended by her appears to have been a son of her friend Nanni di Ser Vanni; and there was a certain Nicholas di Ghida,

[1] Scarcely do we pass the rose-hung walls which encircle the fortifications (of Siena) than we are in an upland desert piteously bleak in winter, but most lovely when spring has come to clothe it. The volcanic nature of the soil gives a softer tint to the colouring. Miles upon miles of open grey-green country—treeless, hedgeless, and houseless,—swoop towards one another with the strangest sinuosities of volcanic earth, till at last they sink away in pink and blue distances, so far off, so pale and aerial that they can scarcely be distinguished from the atmosphere itself. Only here and there a lonely convent, with a few black cypresses around it, cuts the pellucid sky. Here, in these great uplands where all is so immense that the very sky itself seems more full of space than elsewhere, it looks as if it were the very heaven itself, only far away. The steep ascent leads to Monte Oliveto through a barren desert, but about half a mile from the gates the scene changes, and the desert becomes an oasis. The immense depths below the buildings are covered with wood, while the road is fringed with cypresses and the ancient olive trees which gave the place its name."—(Hare's *Cities of Italy*, vol. iii. p. 300.) Æneas Sylvius, afterwards Pope Pius II., visited this spot and speaks of the figs and almonds, pears and apples, and the groves of cypresses; vineyards, too, and walks in the shade of vine leaves, a perennial spring of water with tanks and wells, and fine groves of oak and juniper; and a number of walks winding about the hill with borders of vines, roses, and rosemary.

a famous physician of Siena, who, joining himself to the company of the Saint's disciples, was led to renounce the world and all its attractions, and by her advice took the white habit of the Olivetans. Her letters to all these religious are remarkable for their appreciation of the duties of a monastic life, and specially for their admirable instructions on that virtue of religious obedience on which depends the preservation of true observance. In one of these she develops the thought (so truly Dominican) that he who observes the vow of obedience, virtually observes all the other vows. "His bark," she says, "sails straight to the port of Eternal Life, without striking on any rock. For many rocks are to be found in the stormy sea of this life, and we shall make shipwreck on them unless we are directed by the safe wind of obedience. The malice of the enemy seeks nothing so much as to disgust us with prayer and holy obedience, and to make us believe it impossible to persevere, or to support the obligations of our rule. He persuades us to take a straw for a beam, and a hasty word for the blow of a dagger. Again, there is the rock of the world, ever presenting itself to us decked in the fair show of riches, honours, and pleasures. And yet in reality it affords nothing but bitter regrets. It has no solidity, no duration, and all its seeming joys quickly vanish. Their beauty is like that of flowers; when we behold them in the meadows they rejoice the eye and the smell, but as soon as they are gathered, their beauty and their sweet smell disappear. And so the things of this world attract and deceive us; they look beautiful; but the soul which gathers them out of an irregular love finds them empty, without colour, and without perfume: for the perfume of earthly things comes from the holy thought of God, from Whom they proceed; but it is lost to him who would gather and possess them unlawfully. It is not the fault of the things themselves, or of their Creator; but only of him who has gathered them, and would not leave them where he found them growing, and where they ought to remain: I mean, who has not loved them only for the sake of God." Then she shows how this irregular love of earthly things is destroyed by the practice of poverty; and poverty is only truly

practised by him who is obedient to his rule. "He cares for no sensible loss or suffering, because self-will is dead in him, and to him who has no will of his own, pain is a pleasure, and tears a delicious drink. Yes, obedience is truly a queen crowned as with a royal diadem! She holds the sceptre of perseverance, and bears on her bosom the flowers of all the virtues; and she gives to mortal men the foretaste of heaven, so that a man becomes an earthly angel!"[1]

[1] Letter 77.

CHAPTER VII

The Dialogue and the Letters

EVERY life has its brief seasons of repose and consolation. For the most part such moments intervene between more troubled periods, as though granted to recruit the soul exhausted by past trials, and to prepare her for yet harder ones. Yet, brief as they are, such times have an unspeakable sweetness; we dare not trust them, for we know too well their fleeting nature, but they come to us like a momentary foretaste of our blessed rest hereafter.

Such a season there was in the life of St. Catherine; a lull granted to her between the stormy scenes of her Florentine mission, and the rising of another tempest of which she did not live to see the close. She returned to Siena towards the end of the summer of 1378, with her heart full of joy and gratitude, rejoicing to be the bearer of good tidings, and singing with the angels, "Peace on earth to men of good-will!" And she chose the season of comparative leisure which at last she was able to command, in order to put into writing some of those secrets of the Spiritual Life which she had learnt in her long hours of communing with God.

"As soon as Urban VI. had concluded peace with Florence," says Raymund, "Catherine returned home and occupied herself actively in the composition of a book which she dictated under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. She recommended her secretaries to be present during her ecstasies, and carefully to write down whatever she might then dictate: they did it faithfully, and collected a book full of great and useful truths. She dictated

this work while her soul was abstracted from her bodily senses, so that she neither saw, nor heard, nor was sensible to touch; God desiring to make known that this work did not resemble that of man, but was inspired by the Holy Spirit."[1] The book here spoken of is the Dialogue, and we feel a desire to know some more particulars of its composition than are here given—Where was it dictated? Who were the secretaries? Were any pages written by her own hand?

It is stated in the Process that it was written "at different times and in different places!" but we have indisputable evidence as to the place where, at least, a great portion of it was composed, and where it was undoubtedly finished. Our readers will remember the good hermit Fra Santi, whom Catherine twice restored to health, once at Siena, and once at Rocca, at which last place he was present at the exorcism of the possessed woman. In company with some of her disciples, Catherine often visited him in his hermitage, attached to which was a little chapel, where she loved to retire out of the noise and bustle of the city. In particular, she often came there between the months of July and October 1378, accompanied by one or other of her secretaries and sisters. Here in this oratory or chapel, as Caffarini informs us in the Third part of his Supplement, a good part of the Dialogue was written; and here it was finished on the 13th October of that same year. He attests this fact as an ocular witness, and says he often saw how, when she retired to that spot and began to pray, she was rapt in ecstasy, and began to speak with God as in a dialogue. No vestige now remains of this little oratory, nor does any certain tradition exist as to where it was situated; a matter to be regretted, for, had it been preserved, it would have been justly regarded as one of the most venerable sanctuaries consecrated by the presence of the Saint.

The secretaries who wrote the Dialogue from her dictation were

[1] Leg., Part 3, chap. i. Our readers will, of course, understand that the term "inspired" as here applied to the writings of St. Catherine, must not be interpreted in its rigorous sense. Raymund's real meaning is probably identical with that expressed by Pius II. in the Bull of Canonisation; *Doctrina ejus infusa, non acquisita fuit.*

Neri Landoccio, Stephen Maconi and Barduccio Canigiani, to whose number was sometimes added the faithful Christofano. Caffarini, in his deposition, has very exactly described the manner in which she dictated it. "Sometimes she held her hands clasped on her breast, sometimes she walked about the room, or knelt down for a while, always however keeping her eyes turned towards heaven. And if, from accidental interruptions, she allowed some days to pass without having dictated anything, she would take up the subject as exactly as if she had only just left off, and had everything in her mind."

Stephen speaks for himself in his "Letter to Caffarini," which forms part of the Process. Referring to Catherine's ecstasies, which he had often witnessed, he says, "She gives the explanation of these things in *her Book*, great part of which I wrote from her dictation." But was *all* written by the hand of her secretaries? for by this time she had herself acquired the art of writing. Caffarini assures us that far from its being true that, as Raymund expresses it, "her body was all the time in a complete state of insensibility," she wrote several pages of the Book with her own hand. After relating the story of the verses written in cinnabar at Rocca, he says that this was not a faculty granted for the moment only, but permanently. "The Venerable Don Stephen Maconi, who among others served as her secretary, and was one of those most dear to her, has assured me that she wrote him a letter in the vulgar tongue, as a sign of her partial affection to a most dear son; for it was the first letter she ever wrote. He also assured me that *he had seen her write with her own hands* (*besides not a few important letters*) *many sheets of the Book by her composed in the vulgar tongue.* And he freely confesses out of love and devotion having gathered up some of those sheets; and in order to preserve them in a safe place, he deposited them in the Carthusian Monastery of Pontignano, two miles from Siena, which was the house of his profession" (Sup., Part 1, Trat. 1, § 10).

Gigli, when editing the Saint's works in 1707, made every inquiry to ascertain if these precious autographs were yet in existence, but without success; and he could only suppose that

they had been conveyed to the great Chartreuse a few years previously, at a time when all the smaller Carthusian houses were required to send thither their most valuable manuscripts.[1] But if these pages have been lost, a happier fate has awaited some of the original copies of the Dialogue, written by the hands of her secretaries. One of these which still exists formed the text which Gigli edited. It was at that time preserved in the private chapel of Signor Silvio Gori Pannellini of Siena, and an exact description of the manuscript will probably be interesting to the reader. It is written on parchment, and in the margin appear certain Latin notes, set down by the disciples to whom the Saint dictated. It runs on continuously; the division into chapters, however, being noted in the margin, and, as it would seem, at a later period. Gigli supposes this copy to be in the handwriting of Stephen Maconi. For at the end of the manuscript appear the identical words which Stephen was in the habit of putting at the conclusion of his letters, "Pray for your useless and sinful brother." The same disciple has also added some of her letters, and the *Transito*, or account of her death, to which he prefixes the following introduction: "I will not write part of the order of the happy and glorious end of this most sweet Virgin, according as our base intellects can understand the same, preoccupied as they are with immense grief." Whence it appears that the writer was one of her faithful followers, and as Gigli supposes, none other than Stephen Maconi himself.

The Dialogue was translated into Latin by Christofano di Gano, who gives the following account of the matter in his Memoirs: "This servant of Christ," he says, "made a notable thing, namely, a book about the size of a missal. She composed it all being in ecstasy abstracted from the use of all her senses, except her tongue. God the Father spoke to her,[2] and she

[1] Whilst the present work has been in compilation, application has been made to the Superior of the Grande Chartreuse, to ascertain what had become of these inestimable relics of our holy Mother: but nothing was there known about them.

[2] We must again remind the reader not to attach too rigorous a sense to these expressions. Christofano's addiction to matter of fact led him to make

replied and made her demands of Him; and she repeated His words and her own likewise, and all in the vulgar tongue. She dictated, and another wrote, sometimes Barduccio, sometimes Don Stephen, and sometimes Neri di Landoccio. This is a thing difficult to believe, but to those who heard and wrote it, it does not seem so, *and I was one of these.* Then as the book was in the vulgar tongue, and as those who know grammar or have any learning do not so much care to read things thus written, as they do to read Latin, I, for my own satisfaction and that of my neighbours, translated it into Latin, according to the text, adding nothing; and I tried to do it as well as ever I could, and spent several years over it as a matter of pleasure, now on one part, now on another. And when by the grace of God I had finished it, I sent it to Don Stephen, then at Pontignano, that he might correct it, for it was he who wrote down the greater part of it at Catherine's dictation. And when it was corrected, I caused it to be copied by a good writer, and bound. And it was hardly finished when a certain Bishop, of the Order of Preachers belonging to France, who had seen and spoken with Catherine at Avignon, came to Siena with Master Raymund, then General of the Order. I had not had the book in my house one night before I carried it to the Bishop, who was so pleased with it that he would not let it go out of his hands. And he begged me to give it him, which I did. He assured me that he found some things set forth in that Book better that in any of the Doctors, and declared that he should preach its doctrine in his own country, and gain great fruit of souls."

We cannot attempt in this place anything like an analysis of this celebrated work. Those who would desire to know something of St. Catherine's doctrine must study it in her own pages; nor would it be easy to name any writings which combine in equal proportions the practical with the sublime. In whatever qualified sense we understand the expressions used by her disciples, when speaking of the source whence she derived her doctrine, no

no distinction between the literal and the mystic; and the extreme simplicity of his language must not be measured by rules of theological exactitude.

one can read the Dialogue without feeling that she who dictated those words, uttered them with her own soul absorbed in the presence and the sense of God. This, in fact, was the special grace and privilege which she enjoyed through life; she was never for one moment separated from the Divine Presence; and it is a grace which has stamped its character on every page of her book. Hence it would be difficult for any one to imbibe her teaching without a certain sensible increase in the virtue of faith. Not that she treats of the different revealed doctrines by way of controversy, but with her own soul filled to overflowing with the perfection of that fundamental virtue, she ever sets before us the rock on which it rests, namely, the Truth of God. We might say that she worshipped the very name of truth, as was befitting a daughter of the glorious Order which bears the word VERITAS as its motto. Did we possess such a thing as a concordance of St. Catherine, it would be a marvel to see how often and how lovingly she uttered it.[1] Her understanding was illuminated by that divine light, of which she discourses so wonderfully and in so many places,—the Light of Faith—which communicates to a finite mortal intellect the whole Truth of God.[2] Although, then, St.

[1] We will give but one example from her twelfth prayer. *O Verità, Verità, e chi son' io, che Tu dai a me la Verità tua? La Verità tua è quella che porge la Verità, e con la Verità tua dico la Verità. Non è separata da Te la Verità tua, anco tu sei essa Verità. Tu Deità Eterna, Figliuolo di Dio, venisti di Dio per adempire la Verità del Padre Eterno, e neuno può avere Verità, se non da Te Verità.*

[2] A recent biographer of St. Catherine has hazarded the assertion that in her writings the Saint makes little or no allusion to points of doctrine, specially those "rejected by the reformed churches." If by doctrine is meant controversy, the remark is true; the reformers not having yet arisen, she could hardly be expected to enter the lists against them. But if intended to convey the idea that St. Catherine's teaching is vague on those points of revealed truth, on which the reformers have since differed from the teaching of the Church, its inaccuracy is amazing. We will notice only her words on Faith as first infused into the soul in Holy Baptism (pp, 44, 52, 154). Of the three kinds of Baptism (p. 111). On the necessity of the Holy Sacrament. (p. 184), the virtue of which is not diminished by the sins of the ministers (pp. 25, 37). On Sacramental Confession (p. 111; also Prayer vii.) On Sacramental and Spiritual Communion (p. 96). On the Holy Eucharist (pp. 175–178). On the Dignity and Office of the Pope, as successor of St

Catherine's language is never that of controversy, yet it is worthy of remark, how naturally some of her phrases seem almost to anticipate certain expressions in our "Abridgment of Christian Doctrine;" as when she reminds a man of the world to whom she is writing that "the end of our creation is to love and serve God here, and to enjoy Him hereafter," or speaks of the likeness which our soul bears to the Blessed Trinity in its three powers, namely, the memory, the understanding, and the will.

Nevertheless, it is doubtless true that in speaking of the *doctrine* of St. Catherine we generally have in our mind something distinct from theological teaching. We understand rather her idea of the spiritual life as a path, a bridge by which the soul reaches God by union with Jesus Christ, by the surrender of self-will, by the practice of obedience, and by perseverance in prayer. On all these subjects she tells us the old truths in words so strong and massive, that they seem like huge columns supporting our puny conceptions. While her own spirit of adoring reverence builds up our faith and our sense of God, she teaches us also to understand the value of our own immortal souls. When, indeed, she speaks on that subject, her language may fitly be termed inspired. "The soul in which God dwells by grace," she says, "is a heaven" (p. 49), "when united to Him by charity, it is another Christ" (p. 38); "it cannot live without love, for it was created for love and by love" (p. 76). "Herein is its amazing dignity, that it is able to love God" (p. 77). "It lives to God in proportion as it dies to self" (p. 333). She truly writes as one to whom the gift was given of *seeing souls*. Indeed, certain as it is that St. Catherine knew nothing of the science of human nature from study, she may nevertheless be said to have been an eminent psychologist. Those who are versed in mental science bear witness to her wonderful knowledge of the human soul in all its operations. She sees its nature, its faculties, and its powers as with the vision of

Peter, and Vicar of Christ (p. 183). On Free-Will (p. 62); also Prayer vii. On the foreknowledge of God (*ibid.*) On the Blessed Virgin, who co-operated by her Dolours in the redemption of the world (Prayer 11); and who obtains from God eternal life for those who are her faithful clients (p. 251).

the eyes, and all their mutual relation and interactions, under whatever influence, whether human or divine. She is equally conversant with the effects of every action of soul on body, or body on soul. This science had its origin from the clear intuition which she possessed into her own soul,—an intuition which taught her all the ways of human nature, and which she derived from contemplating herself in the mirror of God's Light. This wonderful knowledge is manifested in every page of the Dialogue, in the opening paragraph of which she expresses the source of her knowledge in these terms:

"A certain soul being full of great and fervent desires for God's honour and the salvation of souls, exercised herself for some space of time in the habit of Virtue, abiding continually in the cell of self-knowledge, in order that she might better come to know the goodness of God. For from knowledge proceeds love, and he who loves seeks to follow the truth and to clothe himself with it. But there is no means by which a creature can so taste and be illuminated by truth as that of humble and continual prayer, founded on the knowledge of self and of God. For prayer thus exercised unites the soul to God, following the footsteps of Christ crucified; and so by the desire, and affection, and union of love He makes her one with Himself. This appears by the very words of Christ himself, 'If any man love Me and keep My word I will manifest Myself to him, and he shall be one with Me, and I with him.' And in other places we find similar words, whence we may gather that He is the Truth, and that by the affection of Love the soul becomes one with Him."

In other words, the illumination of Divine Truth which St. Catherine enjoyed was derived from no human source, but was the effect of her union with God by Love,—a union effected by prayer, and which rendering her one with the Object beloved, put her in possession of the Truth which He Himself manifested to her. Next to her magnificent utterances on God and the soul, we should be disposed to single out the passages in her writings which treat of the Will as among those most remarkable and most useful in these our days. One of the weapons with which she

combated the powers of evil was the earnest warning she gave to her disciples, that their wills, when made strong by grace in the Blood of Christ, are fortresses which cannot be stormed unless we basely open the gates to the enemy. In these weak days, when men are hardly willing to believe in their own possession of a faculty which they have no heart to use, her exhortations on this subject are a true spiritual tonic. "Your will," she writes, "strengthened by the Blood of Christ, is given you by God. You can keep, or you can lose, that fortress, as you please. It is a weapon which if you choose to make over into the hands of the devil, is a knife that will slay you. We call our wills weak; they are weak when they are opposed to God's will; united to His, they are strong." For, far from her was the thought that our human wills have any strength for good apart from the grace of God! Let us hear her own beautiful words: "Thou seest, O Lord, the law of our perverse nature, ever apt to rebel against Thy Will. Thou seest how weak, and frail, and miserable it is. But in all things Thou providest for Thy creature, and hast found a remedy for all. Thou givest him the rock and fortress of Thy Will, to make his will strong; for Thou permittest the will of Thy creature to share in the strength of Thy Will; and hence we see that our will is strong in proportion as it is conformed to Thine, and weak in proportion as it is opposed to Thine: for Thou hast created our wills in the likeness of Thy Will, and abiding in Thee. they are strong."[1]

The subject is of sufficient interest to excuse our adding a few extracts from her letters in which the same teaching is conveyed in a more familiar style. "We may be sure of this that God permits us trials only to exercise us in patience, strength, and perseverance. These virtues all spring out of self-knowledge, for it is in the hour of combat that we learn our own nothingness. If I were anything, I should be able to deliver myself, but of myself I am powerless alike over the tempests of the soul, or the maladies of the body. *We can only conquer by a will that knows how to resist;* and such a will we must seek in the goodness of God." (Letter 56.) "You

[1] Prayer 7.

will say to me, 'I lack the weapons with which to fight, how am I to procure them?' I answer, Every reasonable creature may have them, if he chooses, by divine grace. Both good and evil are effected by the will; it is the consent alone which makes a thing to be either vice or virtue; for without the will, sin would not be sin or virtue virtue. And this will is so strong that nothing has power to move it without its own consent. Hear St. Paul, who says, 'Neither hunger nor thirst, nor persecution, nor the sword, nor things present, nor things to come, can separate me from the charity of God.' In these words he shows us what is the strength of that will which God in His mercy has given us. Let no one, therefore, say *I cannot*, for no person can be excused from wilful sin." (Letter 85.) Again she presses home the truth that the disordered will is the only source of all our sufferings. "To have what we would not have, is indeed the source of suffering; but when we are clothed with the eternal will of God and not our own, we become one with Him, and judge all things in love, according to His most holy Will." (Letter 53.) "The servant is not greater than his Lord; he suffers in love, bathing himself in the Blood of Jesus, *and there his self-will dies.* And when once the will is dead all suffering disappears, for it is our self-will alone that makes our tribulations painful; when that is dead, and we are clothed with God's will, suffering is a pleasure, and sensual pleasure becomes a pain. This is the way by which the saints travelled; they knew that the eternal kingdom was not to be bought with pleasure; but when our will is one with God's will, then indeed we enjoy the foretaste of eternal life." (Letter 55.)

But this sensitive self-will is always in rebellion, how then are we to master and kill it, and bring it into subjection? Here is her recipe, strong and heroic teaching indeed, and, as we know, one she had made trial of by her own experience. "Let reason sit on the tribunal of your conscience, and pass over not so much as the least thought opposed to God. Let a man know how to distinguish between his reason and his sensuality, and let reason take a two-edged knife and put sensuality to death. Let him

reduce it to slavery by never giving it what it cries for. If it asks to sleep, let him watch; if it would eat, let him fast; if it seek any other indulgence, let him take the discipline; if it would give way to sloth and negligence, let him persevere in holy exercises; if it would yield to imaginations inspired by the devil, let him terrify it with the thought of death." (Letter 296.)

The Dialogue, as we at present possess it, is divided into four Treatises, namely, those on Discretion, Prayer, Divine Providence, and Obedience. We would venture the surmise that although the work forms one whole, yet not only were these divisions made from the first, but that certain other portions also, which treat on particular subjects, were written separately, and received distinct titles. This at least seems to explain the Saint's own allusion (in a letter to Francis Tebaldi) to her "Treatise on Tears," by which we understand the 87th to the 97th chapters of the Dialogue. The Treatise on Obedience contains some of the finest passages of the whole composition; as, when she comes to speak of the different religious Orders in the Church and their distinct object and spirit, unable to restrain the enthusiasm of a loyal daughter of St. Dominic, she describes the glorious Father guiding the ship of his Order, and "desiring that his sons should seek no other thing than the glory of God and the salvation of souls . . . And he made his Order a royal Order, large, joyous, and odoriferous, as a delightful garden."[1]

We cannot close this chapter without saying a little more on the subject of the Saint's letters, which in style and variety are not inferior to the Dialogue.

And first, it may be of interest to compare with the account which Caffarini has given of her method of dictating the Dialogue, another description which is given by Francesco Malevolti in his deposition, of what he himself witnessed when writing her letters; for he frequently acted as her secretary: "I saw her dictate many letters at the same time to several writers," he says, "and particularly to three at once, and this not once only, but innumerable

[1] *La sua religione, tutta larga, tutta gioconda, tutta odorifera, è uno giardino dilettissimo in sè.* Dial., chap. clviii.

times, and during the course of many years. . . . When she so dictated, her dictation never required correction, addition, or retrenchment, unless from some fault on our part. Once we were all three writing at the same time, one was engaged on a letter to be sent to Pope Gregory XI., another on one to be sent to the Lord Bernabò Visconti, and the third to another great personage, whose name I now forget. She dictated now to one and now to another; now with her face covered, now looking to heaven with her hands crossed, and many times in ecstasy, yet in that state still continuing to dictate. It happened as she did so, that as she said some words only to one of us, we each wrote down the same words, each one believing they had been spoken to himself. When we perceived this, we supposed we had committed an error, so asked her to which of us she had spoken those words, because each of us had written them down. But she answered kindly, 'Do not be uneasy, you have done right; we shall see when the letters are finished that the words will answer the purpose of all.' And wonderful to say, although the letters were addressed on various subjects and to persons so different, yet when we read over these words, they were so much to the point of each of the three letters, that not one of them could have done well without the words in question."[1]

The many extracts which have been already given of these wonderful compositions may have furnished the reader with some idea of their general character; but it is only after a close and long perusal, assisted by a study of the circumstances under which they were written, and the persons to whom they were addressed, that we can gain a real insight into the mind and heart of St. Catherine, a mind illuminated by its continual contemplation of the Eternal truth; a heart made one with the Heart of Christ. Setting aside their value as a body of spiritual instructions, how unspeakable is their beauty! the freshness of their illustrations, the vigour of their style! Open them at hazard where you will, and you are sure to light on some passage flooded with intellectual splendour. "God manifests Himself in many ways," she

[1] Dep. Fran. Mal., chap. vii.

says, writing to a Carthusian of Pontignano, "for has not the Blessed Christ told us that in His Father's house there are many mansions? Who could number up the diversity of gifts and graces which are to be found, not merely in all creatures, but in one soul! For though all must have the virtue of charity, and without it all the other virtues are nothing, yet each has some one virtue which predominates over the rest, and this makes up the differences of life. The saints who have attained eternal life did not all attain it in the same way. They do not all resemble one another; and there is the same difference among the Angels; they are not all equal. One of the great joys of the soul in eternity will be to contemplate the greatness of God in the variety of rewards which He dispenses to His saints. We find the same variety in created things, which all differ one from another, yet were all created for the same end; for God created them all for love. He who would know God's glory and greatness may find it in the contemplation of all these things, whether visible or invisible." (Letter 55.)

Let us hear her addressing Rainaldo of Capua, of whom we are told that he was "a man of subtle genius and a great investigator of the mysteries of God and of the Holy Scriptures." Proud of his intellect, he considered himself to be thereby an enlightened man; and Catherine, without presuming to rebuke him for his conceit, endeavours to set before him the grand truth that the real light of the soul is not knowledge, but Faith; and that without it we walk in darkness. "If we consider by what means we may lose the eye of the body," she says, "we find that it may be lost by the blow of a sword or a stone, or by dust which enters and injures it, or by heat, as happens to those who are blinded by the glare of a red-hot vessel, which destroys the pupil;[1] by all these ways we lose our bodily sight. And the eye of our understanding is in like manner destroyed by the sword of vice, or the

[1] She is here alluding to a cruel method of blinding criminals by compelling them to fix their eyes on brazen vessels, made red hot. This punishment was practised in the Middle Ages at Constantinople. The eyes of the victims were thereby destroyed without disfigurement.

dust of earthly pleasure; by the glare of vainglory, or the scorching heat of pride. . . . Yet a man may recover his sight by somewhat the same means as that which caused its loss. What is that burning vessel which, placed before the eyes of our intelligence, will restore their sight? even Jesus, who entering the vessel of our Humanity, displayed there the burning fire of God's ineffable charity, and the splendour of the Divine nature united to the nature of man. That is the object on which if our eye be fixed, it will dry up our self-love, and dissipate our darkness, and diffuse a supernatural light into our understanding." Then she goes on patiently unfolding the idea that is in her mind, how when the supernatural illumination of Faith is substituted for the natural light of our own purblind intellect, it produces all the virtues; first, love, because we cannot love until we know; and then humility, and the desire to be like what we love, and therefore the desire of suffering. And thus at last the soul attains the sublime virtue of Patience, understanding that God gives us tribulations and temptations only that we may be sanctified in Him; and accepting them sweetly "because it cannot complain of that which is its good." Having got thus far, it is not difficult for her to remind Rainaldo that the humble believer seeks not to penetrate the secret mysteries of God, but rather to know himself, to see in all things God's will, and to taste the fire of His charity. "But unlike Him, the proud and presumptuous man before he will enter the valley of humility pretends to examine the conduct of God and to ask, 'Why does He act thus? Why does He give to me what He has not given to another?' As though he would lay down laws to God instead of adoring His goodness.

"And there are some who, destitute alike of humility and self-knowledge, would subtilise, and with the darkened eye of their own understanding would seek to understand and explain the Holy Scriptures and the Apocalypse, and so draw death out of life, and out of light, darkness. The soul that should be full of God, is full of vain phantoms, and all because, instead of descending, it has sought to exalt itself. What folly! I do not know myself, and I presume to investigate the secrets of God! *But if we would*

see the stars of His mysteries, we must first descend into the deep well of humility;[1] for the humble soul casts herself upon the earth in acknowledgment of her own baseness, and then God raises her up." Then she goes on to speak of prayer, as the means by which the soul may unceasingly gaze upon the Truth; and all this is the work of Faith which inspires humility and sorrow for sin, and chases away despair, and establishes us in Hope. Then at the sound of that word, like one on whose ears there bursts a sudden strain of exquisite music, she breaks forth into one of those passages to which it is hard to refuse the name of poetry, only because not written in the metre of versification:—

"O Hope! Sweet Sister of Faith! 'tis thou that with the Key of the Blood dost open the portals of Eternal Life! Thou guardest the city of the soul against the enemy of confusion: thou slackenest not thy steps when the demon would seek to trouble the soul with the thought of her sins, and so to cast her into despair; but generously pressing on in the path of virtue, and putting in the balance the Price of the Blood, thou placest the crown of victory on the brow of perseverance!" (Letter 236.)

It is difficult in looking over the large collection of St. Catherine's letters to know which to select as best worthy of our study. Those addressed to the religious houses of various Orders with which she was connected are wonderfully solid in their instructions. No less solid, though written from a totally different point of view, are her letters of direction to persons living in the world; and of these we would choose the five addressed to Ristoro Canigiani as models of prudence and persuasive eloquence. Ristoro, the son of Peter, and the elder brother of Barduccio Canigiani, was a man of uncommon gifts and endowments. He was a skilful advocate, and cultivated a taste for literature, showing himself no mean poet, if we may judge from

[1] This exquisite illustration is founded on a fact well known to men of science, even in St. Catherine's days, namely, that even at noon the stars may be discerned from the bottom of a deep well, or the shaft of a mine. Such excavations have been made for the purpose of astronomical observations at various times and places; one of the most famous was to be seen in the Paris observatory built by Louis XIV.

his poem of the "Ristorato," which is still preserved. He had incurred great losses in the insurrection of the Ammoniti, but his intercourse with Catherine during her residence in Florence had inspired him with a certain indifference to worldly prosperity, and after her departure he wrote to her to say that he forgave those who had injured him in the late troubles, and that he felt a desire in his soul to spend the remainder of his life more entirely for God. But here was his difficulty. His place was in the world, for he was married and the father of a young family; and his profession obliged him to mix with public affairs; and how was all this to be harmonised with a devout life? Then in the matter of his worldly property; did the Gospel rule require him not to demand what was justly his, but to abandon his lawful rights? and was his profession of advocate really one in which a man could serve God? In fact, he laid before her exactly the ordinary perplexities which are continually arising in the consciences of those whose vocation is to sanctify themselves in a secular state of life.

Catherine replies with a discretion and moderation which exacted from him no more than he was able to perform, while at the same time she leads him gradually on to perfection, in proportion as his firmness of purpose becomes strengthened, and his spiritual instincts have grown keener. He may certainly claim what is justly due to him; for no man is required to renounce what justly belongs to him. If he feels inspired to keep away from the Palazzo and other places of public resort, that is well. It is best to fly occasions of disturbance and temptation, and to remain in the quiet of his own home. "Nevertheless," she says, "I make one exception; if the poor have need of some one to plead their cause, you will greatly please God by exerting yourself for them out of charity, as St. Ivo did in his time, and so earned the title of the advocate of the poor." Then if he wants some easy way of sanctifying his every-day duties, let him take the exercise of the presence of God. "Think that the eye of God is ever on you and that you must die, and you know not when. Labour for the peace and happiness of your soul, that is your first

duty. Relieve your conscience of everything that can burden it, forgiving injuries and repairing wrongs. Sell some of your superfluities, your sumptuous clothing, for instance, which is of no use, but rather dangerous, for it puffs up the soul with foolish pride. Nevertheless, I would have you dress becomingly, only with less expense, and, as far as you can, persuade your wife and children to observe the same rule, for a father is in duty bound to bring up his children according to the laws of reason and virtue. I think you are right in refusing state offices, for the experience you have had of them shows their danger."

Then she passes to his religious duties, and recommends monthly confession; if more often, so much the better, but not less. Communion on great feasts, or at least once in the year; and if he possibly can, let him hear Mass daily. Then prayer, and at certain times in the day a few moments of recollection; so as to recall the thought of our sins and God's goodness, and to remind ourselves how much He loves us. "Say every day the Office of our Lady, if you do not do so already, that she may be your refuge and advocate before God; and fast in her honour on Saturdays, as well as on the other days prescribed by the Church. And at all times live simply, and renounce excessive banqueting, for no man can long preserve innocence if he does not know how to mortify himself in eating and drinking." Then from the level of this ordinary rule of life, she leads him on, step by step, to higher things, till in her last letter we plainly see that he and his wife have generously embraced a life of perfection. There is no longer question of Communion "once a year," but frequently; he has come to understand what is meant by the "continual prayer of holy thoughts and desires," and to "love often to find himself with God in actual prayer;" and his eyes have opened to that interior light which draws him powerfully to the love of virtue "in all times and places and positions wherever God places us, conforming ourselves in all things to the sweet will of Him who desires nothing but our sanctification. Oh, what immense joy fills my heart!" she exclaims, "when I think of your salvation; for I see by your letter that this light has not

been obscured in your soul. Otherwise you could not see so clearly the misery and inconstancy of the world, or despise it so truly, and so earnestly follow after perfection. Oh, how happy I shall be to see you advancing still from virtue to virtue, spite of the attacks of the enemy who will not fail to surround you with snares; and to cherish and augment that light, I would have you ever keep before your mind four things. First, remember how much God loves you; secondly, reflect how generously we ought to love God; in the third place, consider how detestable sin is to God and man; and fourthly, think of that everlasting reward of which St. Paul says, 'that the sufferings of this life are not to be compared to the eternal weight of glory which God has prepared for those who love Him.' Courage, then," she says in conclusion, "courage in the Precious Blood! It is ever near you. Love to be alone with God in prayer, and repeat all these things to your wife. Quit the common way, and embrace the life of angels; God calls you to it. Respond generously to His call, and you will indeed, even in this world, be a family of Angels."

Occasionally there fall from her pen expressions of amazing beauty, which show how richly her mind was stored with graceful images. Writing to the Cardinal del Porto, she says, "I said just now that you must be a lamb in order to follow the true Lamb. But you must be a lion also, and utter your roar over the Holy Church, to the end that you may raise to life again the children who lie dead in her bosom.[1] If you ask, 'Where am I to learn that cry?' I answer, From the Immaculate Lamb, Who though in His Humanity He uttered no cry, but remained meek and silent, yet in His Divinity He gave forth the cry of His measureless compassion. For in the power of that love which united God and man the Lamb became a Lion; and from the Cross He sent forth His cry over His dead child—humanity;—a cry which destroyed death, and restored life to the whole human race." Writing to another Cardinal, James Orsini, she speaks of the folly of pride, a fault into which men fall through

[1] It was a poetical notion of the Middle Ages that the lion could raise its dead cubs to life again by roaring over them.

lack of self-knowledge. "For if men knew their own nothingness, they could not be proud. The being we have, we received from God. We did not ask Him to create us: He was moved to do it out of the love which He had for His creature, whom regarding in Himself, He became enamoured of its beauty. The soul that looks within sees there God's goodness. She sees that she was the real rock in which His Cross was fastened; for neither the rock nor the nails would have kept it there without the force of love. I remember what was once said to a certain servant of God, who cried out in fervour of spirit, saying: 'O Lord, would that I had been the stones, and the earth in which your Cross was planted! What grace should I not have received when your Precious Blood flowed down from the Cross!' And the Sweet and Sovereign Truth replied: 'My daughter, thou and all reasonable creatures were indeed the stones that held Me fast; for it could only be My love for you that so held me; nothing else was capable of holding the Incarnate God!'"

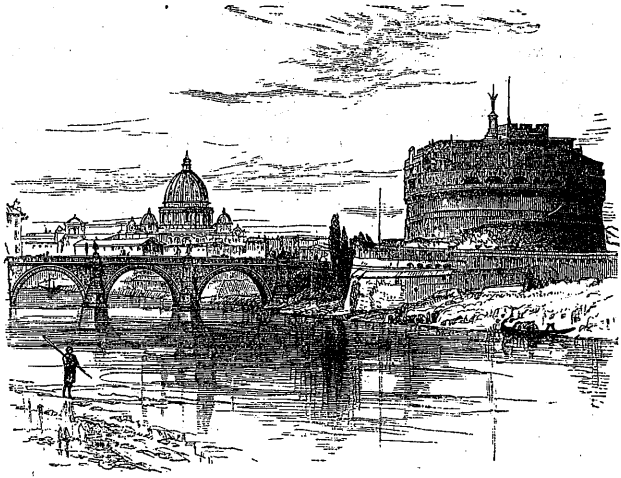
Of her more familiar letters the many quotations already given in different parts of the present volume may perhaps suffice as specimens. It is difficult, if not impossible, however, to render the beauties of her style in a translation, and particularly the tenderness which, like a true woman, she usually reserves for those of her disciples who gave her most trouble. Thus in writing to Francesco Malevolti, whose complete conversion was not effected until some time after her death, and who was always making good resolutions and as often breaking them, she addresses him as *Carissimo e sopra carissimo figlio;* and adds, "I may well call you dear, for you have cost me many tears and much anguish; but console my soul, and do not refuse to come to me." Brother Simon of Cortona was a novice, and as such comes in for the youngest child's portion in the shape of messages such as a mother sends to her nursery, "Bless my son Simon for me, and tell him to open his mouth for some milk which his mother is going to send him." "Bless my dear son Simon for me, and tell him he must learn to run with the stick of good desires." Messages of this sort often occur in her letters to F.

Bartholomew Dominic, with whom she was completely at her ease. When at Asciano he wrote to her, begging her to come there and take part in the good work that was going on. "I would come willingly," she replies, "were it only to please you; but the weather does nothing but rain, and I have been so weak for ten days past, that I have scarce been able to get to the church except on Sunday. Father Thomas feels compassion for me, and does not think me fit to come so far. . . . I must therefore help you invisibly by praying for you and all the people, though, had it been possible, I would gladly have helped you visibly also. Tell Brother Simon, my son in Jesus Christ, that a son should never be afraid of coming to his mother, and that he should run to her, specially when he has been hurt. Then his mother opens her arms and takes him to her bosom; and though I admit that I am but a bad mother, yet I will always carry him on the bosom of charity. So now remember, no negligence but zeal, and then my soul will be joyful before God." As was natural, one who could be so tender in encouragement, could equally use a mother's familiarity when it was necessary to give a rebuke. "Respond, negligent son, respond to God's grace," she writes to Stephen Maconi; "it is a shame to see God always standing at the door of your soul, and you not opening it to Him." In fact, she generally contrives to give Stephen a little motherly admonition even in the titles of her letters, which are addressed to "Stephen, my worthless and ungrateful son;" or to "Stephen, poor in all virtue." Writing to Neri, she says, "Encourage and bless my son Simon from me a thousand and a thousand times; tell him to pray for all his brothers, who send him their compliments, specially that negligent Stephen." Probably Stephen himself was acting on this occasion as secretary.

Our limits warn us to stop, though to do so we must close the volumes that solicit us to linger over their pages. We will but add that both the Dialogue and the Letters are accepted by all critics as models of pure Italian; that the most learned academies have ranged them amongst their *Testi di Lingua;* and that the dyer's daughter of Siena has taken her place in the literature of her native land by the side of Petrarch and Bocaccio.

Part IV

THE GREAT SCHISM



THE CASTLE OF ST. ANGELO, ROME

CHAPTER I

Urban VI., 1378

GREGORY XI. died at Rome on the 27th of March, 1378. The College of Cardinals, on whom devolved the duty of electing his successor, consisted of twenty-three members, of whom one was a Spaniard, four were Italians, and the remaining nineteen were Frenchmen. Only sixteen Cardinals were present in Rome, six remaining at Avignon, and one being absent at Sarzana, where the Congress was then sitting. They entered the conclave immediately after the funeral obsequies of the late Pope had been concluded, and had hardly commenced their proceedings when a tremendous uproar was raised in the city by the populace, who demanded that a Roman, or at least an Italian Pope should be given to them. The Cardinals themselves were divided in their

wishes; seven of the French Cardinals desired a Limousin; the others were as hotly opposed to this proposal; till, seeing the impossibility of carrying the election according to their own views, they determined on fixing their choice on some Italian prelate, renowned for virtue, who should be equally independent of either party among the electors. Their choice fell on Bartholomew Prignano, Archbishop of Bari, and a Neapolitan by birth. This latter circumstance seemed to secure his favourable acceptance by the Roman people, as well as the support of the Queen of Naples, whose close alliance with France would also, it was hoped, secure the good-will of the French nation. The election was unanimous, with the exception of Cardinal Orsini, who contented himself with declaring that he gave his vote to whoever should be elected by the majority. The Archbishop was therefore admitted into the conclave; and his election being made known to him, he was declared Pope in the usual manner, taking the name of Urban VI. Knowing the turbulence of the populace, however, the Cardinals hesitated at once to publish the election, lest they should provoke a riot when it was known that they had not elected a Roman. They were considering how best to act, when some report of what had passed having transpired, the mob surrounded the conclave with cries and threats of violence. To gain time until they should be able to effect their retreat to a place of safety, the Cardinals allowed the rumour to be put in circulation that Tebaldeschi, the old Cardinal of St. Peter's, had been elected Pope, but that he had declined the dignity; and in fact, his name had been proposed by Cardinal Orsini, and rejected on account of his great age. At the mention of his name the excited crowds at once rushed to his house, and according to what was considered their privilege in such cases, began to pillage it; others forced their way into the conclave, as though to compel Tebaldeschi to accept the papal dignity. The terrified Cardinals implored him not to undeceive the excited people, until they should have had time to effect their escape; and the poor old man found himself against his will clad with pontifical vestments, and half suffocated by the crowds of citizens who came to kiss

his hands and feet with every boisterous demonstration of delight. At last he succeeded in delivering himself from their hands, and made known to them the fact that it was not he, but the Archbishop of Bari, who was elected Pope; on hearing which, there was a burst of indignation. "We will not have him!" they cried, "we will have none but a Roman!" The tocsin was sounded, and the whole city was thrown into a state of excitement and alarm.

Next day, however, calm was restored; and the Cardinals reassembled to confirm their election of Urban. This was done, and the customary acts of homage were paid him with all possible solemnity. On Easter Day he was crowned at St. John Lateran's with great pomp, after which he despatched letters to all the reigning sovereigns of Europe, announcing his election; and received in return their respectful acknowledgments and congratulations. As to the part taken by the Cardinals, a few facts will suffice to show how entirely the election was recognised to be their own free act. Cardinal Robert of Geneva had been one of the first to offer his spontaneous act of homage; Cardinal Gerard of Amiens, on his return from Sarzana, followed the example of his colleagues. They all addressed letters to the Emperor and other sovereigns, declaring the election they had made; Robert of Geneva himself writing other letters to the same effect to the Emperor, the Count of Flanders, and the Duke of Brittany. Finally, all the members of the Sacred College present in Rome addressed a joint letter to the six Cardinals at Avignon, in which, after declaring Urban VI. to have been lawfully and canonically elected, they use the following words: "At the hour when the Divine Paraclete descended into the hearts of the Apostles at Jerusalem, we freely, and by common consent, united our votes on the person of the most reverend Father in Christ, Bartholomew, Archbishop of Bari; a man eminent for his great merits, whose virtues shine like the lamp of the Sanctuary. . . . We announce these things to you, that if the death of Pope Gregory has filled you with sadness, the gift which God has given to us of such a Father may inspire

you with joy."[1] We may add to this the significant facts that the same Cardinals officiated with the Pope at all the great feasts of Easter, the Ascension, Pentecost, and Corpus Christi; that they took part in many of his official acts, such as the conclusion of peace with Florence; and that they applied to him for not a few dispensations and favours for themselves or their friends; Robert of Geneva, in particular, petitioning for, and receiving several special graces; and we gather from the whole narrative, variously as it is related by various historians, three conclusive facts in which all agree. First, that the election of Urban was unanimous. Secondly, that so far from its having been made through fear of the turbulent people, the violence of the populace had been excited by hearing that their demands of a Roman Pope had not been granted. Thirdly, that after making the election, the Cardinals confirmed it; and again and again declared by act and in writing that it had been truly and lawfully made.

The character of the new Pope differed greatly from that of his predecessor. He was a man of great learning and equally great austerity of life, well known as holding in detestation both the habits of luxury and the simoniacal practices too common at that time among ecclesiastics. Maimbourg, whose authority may certainly be trusted as that of an adverse partisan, says of him in his "History of the Great Schism," that before his elevation to the Chair of St. Peter he appeared to be humble, modest, the friend of good and learned men, pious and mortified, given to practices of penance, and very zealous for the glory of God and the good of the Church. That the severity of his temper was also well known is apparent from a letter written to St. Catherine by Dom Bartholomew, Prior of Gorgona, and dated April 27th, 1378. It seems that the Cardinal of Amiens was at Pisa on his way to Sarzana, when he was summoned back to Rome by the death of Gregory, being escorted thither by Andrew Gambacorta. "Know," writes Dom Bartholomew, "that Master Andrew Gambacorta returned to Pisa last Sunday. According to what he says, this Holy Father of ours is *a terrible man*, and greatly

[1] Rinaldi, An. 1378.

frightens people by his acts and words: he says he will have peace, but with the honour of Holy Church; that he does not care for money, and that the Florentines must come to him with truth, and not with lies. . . . He shows great confidence in God; and on that account fears no man in the world, and openly proclaims his resolve to banish the simonies and pomps that reign in the Church of God; and himself shows the example by living moderately with all his Court." This letter fairly represents the character which Urban then bore, and justifies St. Catherine, when writing to her friends at Lecceto, in speaking of him as "a good and just Pastor, who is resolved to purge and root up vices, and to plant virtues; fearing no one, but acting justly and bravely." (Letter 127.)

And, in fact, Urban deserved these commendations; he was a man of unspotted virtue, and had resolved on devoting himself to the difficult task of reform; but he had a stern and inflexible temper, and pursued his purpose with more determination than prudence. Catherine, who had first made his acquaintance at Avignon, and with whom he had since then kept up his relations by correspondence, had early discerned the one defect in his character; and in the first letter she addressed him after his elevation, she drops a few gentle words on the prudence of mingling mercy with justice, which else would rather become injustice. (Letter 15.) Writing at the same time to Cardinal Peter de Luna, she urges him to support the Pope in his measures of reform, but to advise him to employ methods of gentleness and sweetness. (Letter 25.) A little later, when perhaps the rumour had reached her that the first steps taken by the new Pontiff were of a character likely to estrange from him the hearts of his Cardinals, she ventures to address him in yet plainer language. "Act with benevolence and a tranquil heart," she says, "and for the love of Jesus, *restrain a little those too quick movements with which nature inspires you.* God has given you by nature a great heart; I beg of you act so that it may become great supernaturally, and that full of zeal for virtue and the reform of Holy Church, you may also acquire a manly heart, founded in

true humility; then you will have both the natural and the supernatural; for without that, mere nature will accomplish but little; it will rather be apt to find expression in movements of pride and anger, and then, perhaps, when there is question of correcting those near to us, it will relax and become cowardly. But joined to the hunger for virtue, whereby a man seeks nothing but the honour of God without thought of self, it will acquire a light, a strength, a constancy, and a perseverance which are above nature, and which will never relax, but will always remain firm and courageous." (Letter 21.)

Happy would it have been for Urban, and for the Church at large, had he listened to the wise counsel suggested by the words above quoted. But following the dictates of a zeal untempered by discretion, he had already begun by making enemies of those whom he sought to reform. On the very day that followed his coronation, after the termination of solemn Vespers, he reprimanded several bishops who were present, reproaching them as guilty of perjury in having left their bishoprics in order to reside in Rome. The severity of his language provoked a haughty reply from the Bishop of Pampeluna, which might have shown Urban how little was to be gained by this method of procedure. However, some days later, having assembled the Cardinals in Consistory, he made them an address on the text, "I am the good pastor," in which he denounced their vices in terrific language, which struck dismay into the hearts of his hearers. When the Cardinal of Amiens presented himself at Court, Urban reproached him with fomenting the hostilities between the kings of France and England for his own private ends; adding other injurious accusations, to which the Cardinal responded by a gesture of indignation, exclaiming at the same time, "Archbishop of Bari, thou liest!" after which he abruptly quitted the council chamber.[1] Nor was this all. The new Pope showed himself equally insensible to the necessity of conciliating the good-will of temporal sovereigns. The news of his election had been received with every demonstration of joy at Naples, and the queen

[1] Rinaldi, An. 1378, No. 45; Baluze, p. 1159.

had despatched to Rome her husband, Otho of Brunswick, to offer her congratulations as an extraordinary mark of respect. He found himself received at Court, however, with scanty courtesy; while at the same time the Pope is said to have opposed certain negotiations which were in progress for a marriage between the heiress of the king of Sicily and a relative of Queen Joanna's; and the result was deeply to offend that powerful princess, who thenceforward became his bitter enemy. Nor was he more happy in his dealings with the susceptibilities of his French Cardinals; for in the zeal which he expressed (in common with all his predecessors) for the conclusion of peace between France and England, he was careful to declare his resolution, that "the king of England should have justice shown him," in terms which were too readily interpreted in a sense hostile to France.

The immediate cause which led to the breach between Urban and the Cardinals is differently related by different historians. Theodoric of Niem, his secretary, says that he made certain constitutions for reforming the Sacred College, and obliging them to a more canonical manner of life. Thomas Petra, Pro-notary of the Apostolic See, and a fervent disciple of St. Catherine, writes to the following effect: "At the time of the disputes between the Cardinals and Pope Urban, I went to the latter, and humbly besought him to tell me the real cause of the quarrel. He replied, 'Indeed, my son, it has not been my fault. They pressed me to restore the Court to Avignon, but we excused ourselves, saying that we neither could nor would do this, seeing that both Urban V. and our predecessor Gregory had come hither to restore the sanctuaries of this city, to revive the devotion of the people towards the Church, and to pacify Italy, which was not yet done; and that, moreover, even if we wished it, we had neither galleys nor other requisite means. To which they replied that Italy had never been ruled by the See Apostolic; and they proposed that we should sell the possessions of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem all over the world, which would furnish us with means ample for all purposes. Hearing which we shuddered,

and said we would die a thousand deaths sooner than so destroy the right arm of Christendom; and this was the real ground of quarrel." [1]

It can hardly be matter of surprise that no great tie of sympathy should have existed between Urban and his Cardinals. Independent of the fact that they had elected him rather with the view of excluding other parties in the conclave to whom they were hostile, than out of any decided preference for himself, the fact that he was not a member of the Sacred College considerably diminished his prestige, and rendered it more imperative that he should have sought to win their confidence; or, failing that, that he should have counterbalanced their influence by the creation of other Cardinals eminent for their merits, and devoted to his person. This latter policy was repeatedly pressed by St. Catherine both on Gregory and Urban, but by both it had hitherto been neglected; and to this neglect must mainly be attributed the misfortunes which afterwards ensued.

The month of June had now arrived, a season notoriously unhealthy in Rome; and the French Cardinals seized the pretext for leaving the city and retiring to Anagni. They appear already to have concerted their measures, and began by attempting to draw the Pope thither also, with the intention, had he come, of extorting from him an abdication. Disappointed of this hope, they next began to set afloat doubts as to the validity of his election, and engaged Honorius Gaetano, Count of Fondi and governor of the province, to take into their pay certain Companies of the Breton Free Lances; at the same time securing to their side Peter de Rostaing, the French Commandant of the Castle of St. Angelo. On the 26th of June, Urban, who by this time had become aware of his danger, repaired to Tivoli, whence negotiations were opened between him and the French Cardinals with a view to reconciliation, but without success. Catherine in her retirement heard rumours of what was going on, and at once addressed herself to those who seemed to have it most in their power to avert the threatened calamity. In her letters to the two

[1] Thomas Petra, Tom. 4 De Schism: Rinaldi, 1378, No. 25.

Cardinals Orsini and Peter de Luna, she urges them to fidelity to their Head. "I hear," she says, "that discord has broken out between the Christ on earth and his followers. I feel an inexpressible pain, through the fear I have of its producing a heresy. I conjure you, by the Precious Blood that has redeemed you, do not separate from your Head. . . . Alas what misery! all the rest seems but a straw, a mere shadow, compared to the danger of schism."[1]

But Peter de Luna had already suffered himself to be gained over to the party of the rebellious Cardinals, and as cannot be doubted, through a motive of ambition. In fact, the French Cardinals, to whom the adhesion of their Spanish and Italian colleagues was of the utmost consequence, scrupled not to write separately to each one, promising him the tiara if he would desert the party of Urban, and join them at Anagni. At first their intrigues were unsuccessful; the Italian Cardinals remained with the Pope, and took part in several of his official acts; they also endeavoured to mediate between the two parties, and proposed submitting the question in dispute to a general council. Urban would have consented to this proposal, which was, however, scornfully rejected by the French Cardinals; and one by one, the Cardinals Peter de Luna with the three Italians, James Orsini, Simon de Borzano, and Peter di Porto, joined the rest of the deserters at Anagni, and thence proceeded with them to Fondi. One Italian Cardinal, and one only, remained faithful to Urban; it was Tebaldeschi, the aged Cardinal of St. Peter's, who, then lying on his deathbed, solemnly called God to witness that the election of the reigning Pontiff had been made lawfully and freely. The act by which he did this was dated the 22nd of August; shortly after which he expired, and Urban was left alone and unsupported.

Finding himself thus deserted, Urban resolved on filling up the

[1] Letters 28, 29. The Saint here uses the words *heresy* and *schism* as equivalents. But in speaking to Raymund in 1375, when she predicted these events, she accurately distinguished the difference, and declared that the scandal that would fall on the Church would in reality be, not a heresy but schism.

ranks of the Sacred College with men of his own choice; and on the 18th of September nominated twenty-six new Cardinals, of whom two were Frenchmen, and the rest Italians. Possibly this step hastened the action of the rebellious party, as convincing them that there was no alternative between submission and an entire breach. They decided on the latter course, and having assembled at Fondi under the protection of Count Honorius Gaetano, they proceeded to consummate the crime on which they had resolved, urged on by the triple motives of fear, resentment, and ambition.

They began by citing Urban to appear before them, and on his non-appearance, drew up a manifesto, in which they declared him to have unlawfully intruded into the Holy See, to which they had elected him, urged solely by their fears of the populace, and in the conviction that as soon as the tumult was over, he would have been moved by his own conscience to have declined the papal dignity; that they had, it is true, enthroned and crowned him, but still through the sole motive of fear; wherefore he was no true Pope, but deserving rather of the titles of Apostate and Antichrist. This extraordinary statement they embodied in an Encyclical letter, which was sent to the reigning European sovereigns, and otherwise circulated among the faithful. Finally, on the 20th of September, they proceeded to the election of an anti-Pope. Their choice was as disgraceful as the act itself was criminal; they selected one whose name was notorious throughout Europe as "a man of blood," and who, in Italy particularly, had earned himself an unenviable reputation as leader of those Breton troops by whom had been perpetrated the massacre of Cesena. This was Cardinal Count Robert of Geneva, a man not without some princely qualities, for he was possessed of graceful manners and a taste for magnificence; but one who seemed to embody all the faults which were charged against the ecclesiastics of the day; and whose achievements up to that time had been exclusively military. He took the name of Clement VII.; and his election was at once notified to the various courts of Christendom. And thus was inaugurated that guilty and unhappy Schism

which was destined for forty years to rend the seamless robe of Christ. This atrocious proceeding seems partly to have opened the eyes of the three Italian Cardinals, who perceived, too late, that they had been duped by their French colleagues. Nothing could have been more foreign to their wishes and intentions than the election of another French Pope, specially of such a Pope as Robert of Geneva. They therefore at once withdrew from Fondi to a castle belonging to the Orsini, and there remained to watch the course of events, and hold a neutral position between the two parties.

Such was the terrible intelligence which fell on the ears of Catherine at the close of that brief interval of tranquillity which she had enjoyed at Siena after her last return from Florence. Although she had long ago foreseen the event in the spirit of prophecy, it did not on that account cause her a less lively grief. She did not, however, give way to discouragement, but at once addressing herself to Urban, she exhorted him to stand fast in courage and confidence; to remember that nothing great in this world is accomplished without suffering; to cast himself fearlessly into the midst of the thorns, clad in the armour of charity; and to be ready, if need be, to lay down his life for the flock of Christ. "I hear," she says, "that those incarnate demons have elected an anti-Christ, whom they have exalted against you, the Christ on earth, for I confess, and deny not, that you are the Vicar of Christ." Then she set herself to expostulate with those who supported the schism, among whom there was reason to fear that Joanna of Naples was likely to be foremost. On the 7th of October, therefore, Catherine addressed her a letter (Letter 315), in which she admirably sums up the whole question at issue, and shows how false were the pretences put forth by the rebellious Cardinals, that they had acted out of fear in making their election; concluding by an apostrophe to the Cardinals themselves, as vigorous as it is touching.

But while thus engaged, she herself received commands from Urban, summoning her to Rome. He communicated them to her through Raymund of Capua, who throughout this difficult

time gave him his firm and loyal support. On this subject we have Raymund's own precise statement. "The Sovereign Pontiff, Urban VI.," he says, "who had seen Catherine at Avignon, and had there formed a high idea of her wisdom and virtue, desired me to write to her, and bid her come to Rome. I obeyed, but with her usual prudence she replied to me as follows: 'My Father, many persons at Siena, and some even of the Sisters of my Order, consider that I travel about too much; they are scandalised at it, and say that a religious ought not to be always thus on the road. I do not think that these reproaches ought to trouble me, for indeed I have never undertaken any journey except at the command of God and His Vicar, and for the salvation of souls; but to avoid all cause of scandal, I had no purpose of again leaving home. Nevertheless, if the Vicar of Christ desires it, it must be as he wishes. Only in that case be so good as to send me his commands in writing, that those who complain may see and understand that I do not undertake this journey of myself.' Having received this answer," continues Raymund, "I went to the Pope and humbly communicated it to him. He charged me to desire Catherine to come, in the name of holy obedience, and Catherine, as an obedient daughter, did so without delay." On this occasion, as on all those that preceded it, we see that Catherine only left the retirement of her home at the call of obedience, and with manifest reluctance. But when once the will of God and of His Vicar was made manifest to her, her own wishes were laid aside. And thus it was that she once more left her native place and directed her steps to the capital of Christendom, which was to be illuminated with the last setting rays of her earthly existence.

CHAPTER II

Catherine in Rome, November 1378

WE do not know the precise date of Catherine's departure from Siena, but it must have been during the latter part of November 1378, as on the 28th of that month she reached the Holy City. She set out with a sorrowful heart, for the woes of the Church, and the coming calamities which three years previously she had so clearly foreseen and predicted, weighed heavily on her spirits. Nor can we doubt that her last farewell to her own home cost her "some natural tears," as she passed with her little company out of the Porta Romana, and took the well-known road so often traversed on former missions of peace and charity. That road is easy to be traced, as it carried her past Asciano, and the great convent of Monte Oliveto, among whose brethren she numbered so many faithful disciples. It led her to the mountain district through the valley of the Orcia, marked by a thousand recollections most sweet and consoling to her heart. And as she climbed the steep ascent of Radicofani, there must have been some spot, some turning-point on that wild and desolate road, whence looking back over the intervening hills she would have caught the last distant view of the towers of Siena. It is probable that St. Catherine passed through Orvieto on her way to Rome. Writing to her disciple, Sister Daniella of Orvieto, just before she started, she says, "As to my coming to you, pray God that all may be for His honour and the salvation of souls; specially now when I am about to set out for Rome, to accomplish the Will of Christ Crucified, and His Vicar. I know not what route I shall take." (Letter 165.)

We know by a letter addressed to Stephen Maconi [1] that she reached Rome on the 1st Sunday in Advent, which that year fell on the 28th of November. Her suite was numerous, and would have been more so but for her express prohibition. It is certain, however, that she was accompanied by at least seven Sisters of Penance, among whom were Lisa, Alexia, Cecca, and Jane di Capo;[2] and that the entire party numbered about twenty-five persons. It included among others her two secretaries, Neri di Landoccio and Barduccio Canigiani. Stephen Maconi was detained at Siena by family affairs, to his own bitter regret, but greatly to our gain, as the correspondence between him and the rest of his fellow disciples furnishes us with much interesting information which would otherwise have been lost. F. Bartholomew Dominic seems to have escorted her to Rome and then returned to Siena, where he was at that time Prior. Fra Santi, Alphonsus di Vadaterra, and Master John the Third were certainly also of the party. Catherine lodged first in the Rione di Colonna, removing thence to a house between the Church of the Minerva and the Campo di Fiore in the Via di Papa.[3] The whole company of pilgrims seem to have formed one community, and to have lived on alms. "They voluntarily made themselves the poor of Divine Providence," says Raymund, "choosing rather to beg alms with the Saint, than to enjoy an abundance of all things at home, deprived of her sweet and pious company." A letter is preserved from Lando Ungaro, a citizen of Siena who had been despatched to Rome by the Magistrates of the Republic to conclude the negotiations for the restoration of Talamon. It is

[1] Letter 255.

[2] At the time that Catherine left Siena, her mother Lapa was at Florence. She did not therefore accompany, though she afterwards joined her daughter in Rome. Lapa had, it seems, about this time taken the habit of Penance. "Tell the Prior to do as he thinks best about *Sister Lapa*," writes Catherine to Stephen, "if she comes to Siena, I recommend her to you." (Letter 256.)

[3] Caffarini, *Leg. Min.*, p. 131. It is the second of these residences which is shown as Catherine's house, being now converted into a chapel used by the Confraternity of the Nunziatelle.

dated the 30th of November, two days after the arrival of the Saint in Rome, an event he does not fail to notice. "Catherine of Mona Lapa has arrived here," he says, "and our Lord the Pope has seen and spoken with her; I do not know what he has said to her, but only that he was much pleased to see her." He adds: "Everything goes on as before at the castle of Saint-Angelo: they are battering it all day long." In fact, almost immediately on Catherine's arrival she was summoned to the presence of the Holy Father, where, says Raymund, "he willed that in the presence of the Cardinals[1] she should deliver an address, and particularly that she should speak to them concerning the Schism, then just beginning. She did this with much wisdom and at some length, exhorting them all to courage and constancy, showing that Divine Providence watches over all, but specially over those who suffer for the Church, and concluding by saying that none ought to lose heart because of these untoward events, but that they should all do God's work and fear nothing. When she had finished, Urban, much encouraged, exclaimed to the Cardinals, 'Behold, my brethren, how contemptible we are before God when we give way to fear. This poor woman (Donnicciuola) puts us to shame; whom I call so, not out of contempt, but by reason of the weakness of her sex, which should make her timid even if we were confident; whereas, on the contrary, it is she who now encourages us. Is not this matter of confusion to us?' and he added, 'What need the Vicar of Christ fear, even if the entire world be against him? Is not Christ more powerful than the world? and He can never abandon His Church.' It was thus the Sovereign Pontiff spoke, encouraging his brethren; after which he praised Catherine much in the Lord, and granted many spiritual favours both to her and to her disciples."[2] In the advice which Catherine offered to Urban at this juncture, she adhered faithfully to the same policy of which

[1] That is, of course, of those newly created, for none others were then in Rome. Urban was at this time residing at Santa Maria in Trastevere; he was unable to live at the Vatican, owing to the vicinity of the castle of St. Angelo, then in the hands of a hostile French garrison.

[2] Leg., Part 3, chap. i.

she had been the unflinching advocate during the quarrel with the Florentines. To him, as to Gregory, she constantly represented that the Vicar of Christ should seek to conquer his enemies by no other weapons save those of patience and charity. Her admiration for the pure intentions of the Pontiff and his freedom from all human respect, and her hearty sympathy with his zeal for the reformation of abuses, did not prevent her seeing and lamenting that asperity of temper which often rendered his best efforts fruitless; and perceiving that the gentle hints she had from time to time dropped on the subject had not produced much practical result, she hit on a graceful and ingenious method of suggesting to him the necessity of somewhat sweetening the bitterness of his zeal. About Christmas time she sent him a little *regalo*, namely, five oranges preserved in sugar and gilded, which she had prepared with her own hands; accompanied with a letter in which she expresses the profound concern she feels at the bitter sorrows which overwhelm his soul, and draws a distinction between two kinds of sorrow; that which darkens and clouds the soul, and that which, even while it afflicts us, has yet a sweetness about it which supports and consoles. "Those who feel this sweet sorrow," she says, "are careful to drive from them all bitterness, because they seek not themselves, but God. It seems to me, Holy Father, that Jesus the Eternal Truth wishes to make you entirely like Himself. You are His Vicar, and He wishes that in bitterness and suffering you should reform His Spouse the Church. He would make you His instrument, that by a patient endurance of persecution His Church may be perfectly renewed, and come forth pure as a new-born child. All that is old must be renewed in the new man. Give yourself up then to this sweet bitterness, which will be followed by consolation full of sweetness; and be a tree of love grafted on the Tree of life. The love of virtue shall be the flower of that tree; and its ripe fruit, a prayer for God's honour and the salvation of your flock.

"That fruit seems bitter when first we taste it; but when the soul is resolved to suffer until death for Jesus crucified, it becomes

truly sweet. I have often remarked this in the orange, which seems to taste so bitter; but when its pulp is taken out, and it is preserved after being steeped in water, the bitterness disappears. Then you fill it within with strengthening things, whilst you gild its exterior. Where has all the bitterness gone which at first was so disagreeable to the taste? Into the water and the fire. And so it is with the soul that loves virtue. The beginnings are bitter, so long as the soul is imperfect, but the water of grace will draw out the bitterness of self-love, that bitterness which is the only cause of suffering. And so the bitterness is all taken away, and it is filled with the strength of perseverance, whilst it is preserved in the honey of patience mingled with humility. Then when the fruit is finished and prepared, it is gilded outside with the gold of an ardent charity; I say *outside*, for this charity appears exteriorly in the patience with which the soul serves its neighbour, bearing with him with great tenderness, and steeping us in that sweet bitterness which we cannot but feel when we see God offended and souls perishing. And so, Holy Father, we shall come to produce fruits free from all bitterness, and shall overcome that which has been caused by the late mischance, brought about by guilty men who have afflicted your Holiness by the offences they have committed against God." (Letter 19.)

The "mischance" to which she here refers was the lamentable commencement of bloodshed. Sylvester de Budes, Captain of the Breton Free Lances whom Clement had taken into his pay, had made his appearance under the walls of Rome; and finding the gate of St. John Lateran badly guarded, he entered the city and penetrated as far as the Capitol. The principal nobles and magistrates were assembled, unarmed, in the Piazza outside the palace; Sylvester fell upon them and slaughtered two hundred defenceless citizens, among whom were seven bannerets, or chiefs of the city quarters. After this atrocious and cowardly massacre, he withdrew to a place of security outside the walls. But the enraged populace took up arms, and unable to wreak their vengeance on the Breton assassins, they attacked the houses of all the foreigners then in Rome, and slew a great number without

distinction of sex, age, or condition; directing their violence particularly against some English priests who were living at the Pontifical Court, and who, in common with all their countrymen, remained faithful to Urban.

It will be seen, then, that the first blood spilt in this unhappy quarrel was shed by the brutal followers of the Antipope; and Catherine's solicitude was directed to prevent the miserable policy of retaliation. She would not hear of an appeal to arms until every other means had been tried and exhausted: and deeply convinced of the fact that what the rulers of the Church most needed at this crisis was the counsel and support of all true servants of God, she suggested to Urban the plan of summoning to Rome a number of men of known piety and virtue, that he might strengthen himself by their holy presence, and infuse into his Court more and more of the spirit of Christ. The proposal was most acceptable to the Pontiff, who issued a Brief, dated December 13th, 1378, summoning to Rome, amongst other persons, Dom Bartholomew Serafini, Prior of Gorgona, Dom John of the Cells, three hermits of Spoleto renowned for sanctity, and the Augustinian hermits, Brother Anthony of Nizza, and Father William Flete. Catherine supported the summons of the Pope by her own letters, in which she called on all these good men, after the example of the ancient hermits, to make the sacrifice of their peaceful solitude, and to come to the assistance of the suffering Church of God.

Wonderful to say, she met with resistance where we might have supposed she would least have expected it. F. William and Brother Anthony, her two disciples of Lecceto, refused to leave their hermitages; and Catherine, learning the fact, at once wrote two letters, one addressed to them conjointly, which is dated December 15th, 1378, the other to Brother Anthony only, who seems to have been the least refractory of the two. "My dear sons," she says, "I desire to see you lose yourselves and seek no repose save in the salvation of souls and the reform of the Church. At this moment she is in such urgent need that in order to help her you must quit your solitude, and abandon

yourselves. If you would do any good it will not do for you to stand still and say, 'I shall lose my peace.' God has given us a good and holy Pastor who loves his servants and summons them to his side; we ought then to hasten to his aid. Follow the call of God and of His Vicar; quit your solitude and run to the field of battle. I beg of you not to hestitate, and do not be afraid of losing your solitude, for here you will find plenty of woods." This first letter producing no effect, she despatched a second, addressed to Brother Anthony. "My dear Brother," she says, "we have two wills, one sensitive and the other spiritual; but sometimes this last, under the appearance of virtue, holds to its own sense, and likes to choose times and places, and says, 'I like this way best, because in it I can best enjoy God.' It is a great mistake and a delusion of the enemy, who not being able to deceive the servants of God in the first-named will, because they have mortified it, tries to do so in the second, and tempts them by means of spiritual things. This is the time for all true servants of God to show their fidelity, and for us to see the difference between those who love God for Himself, and those who only love Him for their own consolation. When the true servant of God is called on to give up his solitude and labour for God's service, he does it, and appears in public like the glorious St. Anthony, who certainly loved solitude as well as you do, but who nevertheless quitted it in order to strengthen those who were weak in the faith. . . . It seems from the letter which F. William has sent me, that neither he nor you intend to come. I shall not answer that letter; but I groan from my heart at his simplicity, and to see how little he cares for God's honour or the good of his neighbour. If it is out of humility and the fear of losing his peace, he should ask permission of the Vicar of Christ, and beg him to be so good as to leave him undisturbed in his solitude, and then leave the decision in his hands. But your devotion cannot be very solid, or you would not lose it by a change of place. Father Andrew of Lucca, and Father Paulinus, have not acted so; they are old and infirm, but they set out at once. They are come; they have obeyed, and though they wish

very much to return to their cells, yet they will not cast off the yoke of obedience: they have come to suffer, and to perfect themselves in the midst of prayers and tears. This is the right way of acting." (Letters 127, 130.)

Landucci tells us that Brother Anthony obeyed the Saint's injunctions, and came to Rome, where he suffered much for the Church, and died in 1392. But we do not find that F. William followed his example. In fact he retired to the yet more solitary convent called the Selva di Lago, his favourite retreat, which is separated from Lecceto by the forest. It must be believed that he obtained the Pope's excuses for his non-appearance at Rome; and Urban was probably persuaded that the good hermit would do more for his cause by his prayers and writings, than by more active exertions in public, as indeed proved to be the case. Nor are we to suppose that Catherine was very seriously displeased with "the Bachelor," in spite of the scolding she administered to him, for, as we shall see, it was to his care that she recommended her spiritual children as she lay on her bed of death.

In answer to Urban's letters, a considerable number of excellent religious hastened to Rome, and it would seem that Catherine's house became their *rendezvous*. She was not unfrequently called upon to provide even for their temporal wants, a thing which seems a little unreasonable when we remember that she and her own little company were living on alms. "At the time when she was living at Rome in the Rione di Colonna," says Raymund, "she had with her a great number of her spiritual sons and daughters. They had followed her from Tuscany almost against her will, some to make the pilgrimage and visit the holy places, others to petition the Pope for spiritual graces, but all in order to enjoy the sweet conversation of Catherine. Moreover, the Holy Father, at her instance, had called to the city of Rome a number of other servants of God, all of whom she received at her house out of her great love of hospitality. For though she possessed neither lands, nor gold, nor silver, and lived with all her family on daily alms, yet was she as ready to receive and entertain a hundred pilgrims as if they had been but one, confiding with all

her heart in God and never doubting but that His liberality would provide. So that the very least number who dwelt in her house at that time was sixteen men and eight women; sometimes even they amounted to as many as thirty, or even forty. Nevertheless, she had established such good order in her household, that each of the Sisters took it by turns, week by week, to provide and dispense for the rest, so that they might give themselves to God and to the pilgrimages or other affairs for which they had come to the city.

"Now it happened one week that it fell to Jane di Capo to discharge this office. But as the bread which they ate was procured by daily alms, Catherine had desired the Sister who should be in charge always to let her know a day in advance if the bread were failing, in order that she might either send some one out on the quest, or else go herself. But this week (God so permitting it) Jane forgot this order, and so when the dinner hour came, it was found that there was no more bread left in the house than would barely suffice for four persons. Jane, perceiving her negligence, went, full of shame and sorrow, to Catherine, and told her trouble. 'God pardon you, my Sister,' she replied, 'for bringing us into this embarrassment in spite of the directions I gave you. You see all our family are hungry, for the hour is late; where shall we now find bread enough for all who want it?' Jane could only lament over her forgetfulness, and own that she deserved a good penance; so Catherine said, 'Tell the servants of God to sit down to table,' and when her companion represented that there was so little bread to place before them, that if they divided it no one would have sufficient, Catherine only replied, 'Tell them to begin with that little, and God will provide the rest,' and so saying she began to pray.

"Jane did as she was ordered, and divided her small stock of bread among the guests. Hungry and exhausted by the long fasts which for the most part they observed, they found their portions very small, and expected them soon to disappear; but though they ate, and that with a good appetite, they did not come to the end of their provisions, but something was still left on the

table. Nor is this surprising, seeing it was the work of Him Who fed 5000 men in the desert with only five loaves. Everybody, however, was astonished; they asked one another what Catherine was then doing; and hearing she was in prayer, the sixteen persons who were at table said with one voice, 'It is her prayer that has brought us bread from heaven; for we are all satisfied, and the little that has been served to us is rather increased than diminished.' After dinner there remained bread enough on the table to supply the Sisters that were in the house, who all ate abundantly, and they were able also to give a large alms of it to the poor. Lisa and Jane, both of whom were witnesses of this miracle, related to me a similar one, which God worked by the hands of Catherine in the same house, and the same year during Lent,[1] in the week when Cecca was in charge."

It is evident that Catherine's grand spirit of faith awoke to a sense of devout exaltation during her residence within the walls of the Holy City. To her, as to all the faithful when first they tread that consecrated soil, it seemed like home. She saw herself surrounded by the memorials of those whom for years she had most loved and venerated; of St. Paul, the standard-bearer of Christ, whose name was so often on her lips, *Paoloccio mio*, as she sweetly and familiarly called him; of "that sweet virgin St. Lucy of Rome,"[2] her devotion to whom has been noticed by one of her poetical biographers; and of all the countless virgin martyrs in whose steps she longed to tread, and whose glories she reckoned as her own. In fact, it was as the *City of Martyrs* that Rome was so dear to her who truly inherited the martyr spirit. Corne-

[1] That is, during the Lent of 1379. The above miracle probably took place in January of that year (Leg., Part 2, chap. xi.).

[2] The history of this Saint was first published, says Gigli, in the fourteenth century by Pietro de Natalibus. Catherine had probably read it, for in a letter to the Abbess of St. Martha's Convent, she says, "I have just found a new and beautiful light; it is the sweet virgin St. Lucy of Rome who gives it to us." (Letter 150.) This Saint (who is not to be confounded with St. Lucy of Syracuse) is believed to have suffered martyrdom at Rome on the 25th of June.

lius a Lapide tells us that whilst in Rome she was accustomed to perform the devotion of the Stations, going to all the holy sanctuaries in turn, and exclaiming as she did so, "I tread on the blood of the martyrs!" [1] In one of her first letters to Stephen Maconi she gives utterance to something of this pious enthusiasm: "The blood of the glorious martyrs who have died here in Rome, who gave their lives for the love of the Life, and whose bodies here lie buried, seems to live again, and to invite you and the others to come here and suffer for God's glory and for His Holy Church; to come and practise virtue here, on this holy soil where He displays all His greatness, and which He chooses as His 'garden,' calling hither all His servants that He may try them as gold;" and in all her future letters from the Holy City we find her speaking of it under the name of the "Garden."

Although we possess no more distinct notice of the sanctuaries which she visited, our knowledge of the fact that she performed the devotion of the Stations gives us a very sufficient guide in following her footsteps; for, as the reader will remember, this devotion consists in visiting certain of the more ancient Basilicas and churches of Rome, one of which is assigned to each day in Lent, and other holy days in the course of the year; we know, therefore, not only the sanctuaries that she visited, but also the days on which she repaired thither. On the Ash Wednesday of 1379 she would have ascended the Aventine, and paid her devotions in the Church of Santa Sabina, still fragrant with the memory of St. Dominic. There we can picture her spending an hour of ecstatic prayer on the stone where he spent his nightly vigils, or in that chapel of the Rosary, where many years later was to be placed the masterpiece of Sassoferrato, which represents her, in company with her glorious Father, kneeling at the foot of the Madonna and receiving from the Divine Child the Crown of Thorns. Not once only, but many times, as we cannot doubt, she must have bent her steps to that spot so rich in sacred recollections, as well as to the neighbouring sanctuary of St. Sixtus, which is the church of the Station for Wednesday in the third week of Lent. St. Sixtus

[1] Commentary on Isaias, chap. xxvi.

in Catherine's time was still occupied by the community of nuns first placed there by St. Dominic, and it even yet retains evidence that she was known and venerated by its inmates. For on one of the walls behind the choir is to be seen an ancient picture, representing our Lord drawing out of the Wound in His side a garment which He is bestowing on St. Catherine who kneels at His feet, clad in the black mantle and white veil of her Order. Near to her, in much smaller proportions, appears (as a votary) the figure of a nun, who is supposed to be the Prioress of St. Sixtus, by whose order this picture must have been executed shortly after the death of the Saint; for she is represented, not with the aureole of a canonised saint, but with her head surrounded simply with rays.[1]

Catherine had not been long in Rome before the proposal was made to despatch her on a fresh embassy of the greatest difficulty and danger. Queen Joanna of Naples had by this time openly joined the party of the schismatics, and her intrigues placed the Pope in a position of much peril. Urban, however, hoped to conciliate her; and the thought suggested itself to him of placing the negotiations in the hands of Catherine and of another holy virgin of the same name then present in Rome. This was St. Catherine of Sweden, the daughter of St. Bridget, who was personally well known to Joanna. When our Saint heard what was proposed, she declared herself ready to set out at once; but Catherine of Sweden, whose recollections of Naples were sad and recent, had no desire to accept the mission to one whose treacherous and abandoned character she knew too well by experience.[2] Raymund of Capua, too, discouraged the project,

[1] This interesting painting was discovered in July 1852, by the Rev. Père Aussaut, and is considered by experienced judges as certainly as old as the fourteenth century. We have the testimony of F. Thomas Caffarini that these pictures of Catherine without the aureole were greatly multiplied almost immediately after her death. "Her portrait," he says, "represented after the manner of those Saints not yet solemnly canonised by the Church, is to be found multiplied in every province." (Process, 1291.)

[2] St. Catherine of Sweden, celebrated for her extraordinary personal beauty, as well as for her sanctity and wisdom, had been present in Rome at the time

for he believed Joanna to be capable of any crime, and he hesitated to trust the life and honour of two unprotected women in her hands. He stated his objections to the Holy Father, who, after a brief moment of reflection, replied, "You are right; it is better that they should not go." Raymund hastened to communicate this decision to Catherine, who was then lying ill at her house. It deeply disappointed her, nor could she enter into the reasons of prudence which had dictated it. "If Agnes and Margaret and so many other holy virgins had made all these reasonings," she said, "they would never have obtained the crown of martyrdom. Have we not a Spouse Who is willing and able to protect us? Believe me, such objections proceed from a want of faith, rather than from real prudence." However, the proposal was for the time laid aside, though we find from the letters of the Saint's disciples that it was not entirely abandoned until the July of the year following.

But there was another embassy, the accomplishment of which was yet more urgent, and the carrying out of which was to impose on Catherine a new sacrifice. In coming to Rome she had naturally looked forward to a reunion with Raymund of Capua, whose separation from her had been the greatest loss which, humanly, she was capable of feeling. But it seemed as though this last portion of the Saint's life was destined by Divine Providence to be rich in such sacrifices, as though to teach us that it is from the sharp tool of detachment that even the most exalted sanctity must receive its perfect finish. Raymund and Catherine did indeed meet at Rome; and it was on the occasion of their meeting that Raymund, alluding to the troubles of the Church which just then absorbed all minds, reminded her of the words she had spoken some years previously at Pisa, and owned that what they were now witnessing was the realisation of that prophecy. She had not forgotten the circumstance. "I told you,"

of Urban's election, and was intimately acquainted with every incident attending it. In 1379 she was examined on the subject before a regular tribunal, and gave important evidence on matters which she had herself witnessed, and which the Cardinals could not deny. See Rinaldi, 1379, No. 20.

she said, "that what we were then enduring was but honey and milk compared to what would follow; and now I will add that what you witness to-day is but child's play compared to what will soon take place in some neighbouring countries." "She was alluding," says Raymund, "to the dreadful woes which were so soon to fall on the kingdom of Naples, and which perfectly realised her words. Then I added, 'Dearest Mother, tell me what will happen in the Church after all these miseries shall have passed away?' She replied, 'When all these troubles have come to an end, God will purify His Church in ways unknown by men. He will rouse the souls of His elect, and the renewal of life in the Church will be so perfect, that even to think of it thrills my soul with exceeding joy. I have often deplored with you the wounds and nakedness of the Spouse of Christ; but then she will appear brilliant in beauty, covered with precious jewels, and crowned with a diadem of virtues; all the faithful shall rejoice in the possession of good and holy pastors; and unbelievers, attracted by the good odour of Jesus Christ, shall return to the true Fold, and yield themselves to the Head and Bishop of their souls. Give thanks to God, then, for the blessed peace which He will surely grant His Church when this furious tempest is over.' She said no more; and knowing that the Most High is more prodigal of His goodness than of His rigours, I have a firm hope that after our present troubles those good things will come which have been foretold to us by the blessed Catherine; and that it will be made manifest to all men that she was truly a prophetess of the Lord."[1]

This remarkable conversation was one of the very last that ever took place between Raymund and his saintly penitent. He quitted Rome a fortnight after her arrival there; and to explain the causes of their fresh separation we must return to the history of the schism which day by day was making an alarming progress. The man in Europe who might have interfered to check it in its commencement with the best chance of success was King Charles V. of France. The promoters of the conspiracy were all French-

[1] Leg., Part 2, chap. x.

men by birth, and the grand object at which they aimed was the re-establishment of the Papacy on their native soil. They naturally felt that the support of Charles was essential to the success of their design, and with this view they are said, before making their election, to have offered him the tiara. He had the good sense to decline this preposterous proposal, and he did not at first promise them any active support. But the course he determined on was one almost equally fatal to the interests of the Church. He assembled his councillors, and agreed with them to observe an absolute neutrality, neither approving nor rejecting the election of Urban VI. The schismatics were not slow in interpreting this decision to their advantage, and found no great difficulty in convincing the king and his councillors that the political interests of France were on the side of the party which advocated a return to Avignon. It was the old and fatal mistake which ignores the fact that the real political interests of a country must ever be identical with truth and justice. Charles listened to their plausible arguments, and to the representations so busily set afloat, that Urban had resolved to espouse the claims of the king of England; and when, after the election of the Antipope, he despatched envoys to Italy who should report to him on the true state of the case, these envoys were easily gained over to the side of Clement, and on their return laid before the king a statement entirely in his favour. On this it was resolved, in an assembly held at Vincennes, that the election of Robert of Geneva should be received as lawful and canonical, and that throughout the kingdom of France he should be obeyed as true Pope. Yet even after this, with a singular inconsistency which proves how little Charles was really satisfied in conscience on the point in question, he directed that the whole matter should be laid before the University of Paris, and thoroughly examined by its most learned doctors.

The manifest hesitation of the French king gave hopes at Rome, that he might even yet be held back from hopelessly committing himself and his country to the cause of the schism. His known piety and zeal for the faith rendered it difficult to

regard him as one likely to be the promoter of such a crime; and Urban resolved to despatch to him some trustworthy envoy who might succeed in putting the real facts before him and gaining him to be the champion, and not the enemy, of the Holy See. For this office none seemed better fitted than Raymund of Capua, who was perfectly well informed of the whole case, and whose uprightness of character and zeal for justice were united to a moderation and discretion which eminently qualified him for gaining the goodwill of such a monarch as Charles the Wise.

Raymund's narrative shall be given in his own words: "It seemed good to the Sovereign Pontiff to send me into France, for he had been told that it would be possible to detach Charles V., King of France, from the cause of the schism which he had himself excited. As soon as I heard of this project, I went to take counsel with Catherine. In spite of the sorrow which the prospect of my departure caused her, she urged me at once to comply with the Holy Father's wishes. 'Be sure, my Father,' she said, 'that he is truly the Vicar of Jesus Christ: therefore, I would have you expose yourself in his defence as you would do in that of the Church herself.' I myself felt no doubt on the subject; but her words so encouraged me to combat the schism, that from that time I entirely consecrated myself to defend the right of the Sovereign Pontiff, and I often recalled them to strengthen me in my trials and difficulties. I did then what she advised, and bowed my head to the yoke of obedience. A few days before my departure, knowing what would take place, she desired to confer with me on the subject of her interior, and allowed no other person to be present during our interview. Having spoken to me for several hours, she said at length: 'Now, go where God calls you. I think in this life we shall never again speak together as we have just now done.' And it was, indeed, even as she said, for I departed, and she remained behind; and before my return she had passed to heaven, and I never again listened to her admirable exhortations. No doubt it was because she knew it would be so that, desiring to bid me a last adieu, she came to the place where I embarked, and when

we had set forth, she knelt down in prayer and, weeping as she did so, made over us the sign of the Cross, as though she had said, 'Go, my son, in all confidence under the protection of this sacred sign: but know that in this life you will never more behold your Mother.'[1] The exact spot where this touching parting took place is not indicated, but it was evidently on the shores of the Tiber; for as we have seen in a former chapter, the journey from the city to the seashore was then performed by water, the river being still navigable. And thus in the supreme moment of her life, Catherine was left, if not alone, yet deprived of the society of the two persons who, each in their own way, enjoyed her closest confidence, Raymund of Capua and Stephen Maconi. Moreover, as she well knew, Raymund's mission was one of no small difficulty and danger, and on her would fall the duty of encouraging him to brave the perils to which he was exposed. Accordingly, they had hardly parted when she despatched a letter for the purpose of cheering the hearts of him and his companions, and inspiring them with a joyous confidence. 'Courage, my Father and my beloved sons,' she writes; 'go forth like the Apostles, poor, yet bearing with you the riches of faith and hope, and the fortitude of charity. Remember the words that were spoken by the Sweet Word of Truth, "Send forth thy sons as sheep in the midst of wolves! Let them go with confidence, for I will be with them, and if human help fail, My help shall never fail."

"'Oh, my Father and my children, what more help and consolation can you wish for? Who could fear? He who has no confidence may do so: but not he who hungers for God's honour

[1] Raymund does not give the date of his leaving Rome, but we know that it must have been between the 28th of November, on which day Catherine arrived, and the 13th of December, the date of the Pope's Brief to Dom Bartholomew Serafini and the others. For in her letter to the Prior of Gorgona, forwarding this Brief, Catherine says, "F. Raymund has gone to labour elsewhere: the Pope has sent him to the King of France. Pray for him that, if need be, he may give his life for the Church." (Letter 54.) The two persons associated with Raymund in this embassy were James Ceva, Marshal of the Pontifical Court, and William, Bishop of Valence. The Brief appointing them is preserved in the Archives of S. Domenico, Siena.

and the salvation of souls. Such an one will be consumed in the fire of Divine charity; bathed, annihilated, consumed, in the Blood of the Lamb. Alas! I die, and cannot die! My heart breaks because the long-wished-for moment does not come. The Eternal Truth begins to produce flowers, but they do not satisfy me, for we cannot live on flowers; we want fruits. Help me then, my Father and my children, and pray Him soon to send me these fruits.' (Letter 98.) Another letter met the travellers at Pisa. 'It is no longer the time to slumber,' she wrote, 'we must shake off the drowsiness of negligence, and espouse the truth with the ring of fidelity. We must declare the truth, and not keep silence out of fear, but be ready generously to give our life for the Holy Church. We see her now dismembered; but I hope in the Eternal and Sovereign goodness of God that He will heal her infirmities, so that these members may be reunited and renewed on the shoulders of God's saints. Yes! we shall be consoled for all our sufferings by the joy of beholding the renewal of that Sweet Spouse. But silence, my soul, and say no more. I will not speak what is difficult either to say or to write about,—you know all I mean. May you soon return to this sweet garden, and help me to root out the thorns.'" (Letter 99.)

CHAPTER III

Progress of the Schism, 1379

IT is not our purpose to present the reader with anything like a complete history of the Great Schism, but only to notice those facts which are indissolubly connected with the history of St. Catherine, and a clear comprehension of which is necessary, in order to understand the affairs in which she was now engaged. There were three distinct parties who, though at the moment hostile to Urban's cause, appeared nevertheless to offer some hopes of being won over by words of reason to take a better course. These were, the French King, the Italian Cardinals, and the Queen of Naples. Raymund having been despatched to the first of these, Catherine made it her business to try what could be effected with the other two. With the Queen of Naples she had long been in correspondence, and it is evident that in spite of the vices of Joanna's character, Catherine felt a singular interest in her and an ardent desire to gain her soul to God.[1] She had already written her a letter of expostulation before leaving Siena for Rome; she now reiterated her warnings in a yet more solemn tone. "O my mother!" she says, "for so I will call you, if you still love truth and are subject to the Holy Church, otherwise I can no longer give you the name of Mother; I see a great change in you. You have abandoned the counsels of the Holy Spirit to

[1] It must be remembered in judging of Joanna's conduct that she held her kingdom as a fief of the Holy See, and therefore, according to what was universally recognised as the common law of the time, was bound to fidelity by a double obligation. Nor did this obligation rest on any ancient or obsolete transaction of the old Norman sovereigns, for the act had been solemnly renewed by Joanna and her nobles at the beginning of her reign.

listen to the Evil One; you were a branch of the true Vine, and you have cut yourself off with the knife of self-love. You were the beloved daughter of your Father, the Vicar of Christ, and now you have abandoned him. Alas! we may weep over you as over one that is dead, dead as to the soul, dead in the body too, if you do not quit your error. And you will have no excuse; you cannot say when you come to die, 'I thought I was doing right,' for you knew full well you were doing wrong. But I am persuaded this counsel has not come from you. Try then, I conjure you, to know the truth, and who those are who would deceive you by saying that Pope Urban VI. is not the true Pope, and that the Antipope is the Christ on earth, whereas in truth he is an Antichrist. What can these perverse men say for themselves? If it were true that Pope Urban was not lawfully elected, they would deserve a thousand deaths, being thus convicted out of their own mouths as impostors. For if they elected him out of fear, and not by a valid election, and nevertheless presented him to us as being the true and lawful Pope, they gave us a lie in the place of the truth, and obliged us to do homage to one who had no right to it. They had already acknowledged him, asked favours from him, and accepted him as the Sovereign Pontiff; so that, if it were true that they knew all the while he was not the lawful Pope, no punishment could be too bad for them. Every one knows that the person whom they named out of fear, after they had elected the Archbishop of Bari, was the Cardinal of St. Peter's, who, like a brave and honest man, declared to the people that it was not he who had been elected, but the Archbishop of Bari. And whom have they now chosen in his place, if Pope Urban VI. be not the true Vicar of Christ? Is it a man of holy life? No; indeed, we may rather call him a demon, for he is truly discharging the office of the demon. . . . They knew well enough that any just man would have preferred to die a thousand deaths rather than accept their proffered dignity; but now, demons have elected a demon. I say it with profound sorrow, for I love your salvation with my whole soul; but if you do not repent, the Sovereign Judge will punish you in a manner which will terrify

all who would revolt against His Church. Do not wait for His blows, for it is hard to resist Divine justice. You must die, and you know not when. Neither your riches, nor your power, nor your worldly honours, nor the barons and people subject to you, can defend you against the Sovereign Judge, Who sometimes makes even these very persons to be his executioners, in order to punish His enemies. You are exciting against you your own people, who have found in you not a manly, generous heart, but the heart of a mere woman, without strength or firmness, tossed about like a leaf by the wind. They remember how, when Pope Urban VI. was first elected and crowned, you celebrated the event with great festivities, as a child does at the exaltation of its father, and a mother at that of her son; for indeed he was both your father and your son,—your father, by the dignity to which he was raised, and your son as being born the subject of your realm; and now all this is changed, and you command them to take the opposite way. Oh unhappy passion! The evil you have embraced yourself you wish to impart to them, and instead of truth you would give them a lie. Oh, do so no more, for the love of Jesus! You are calling down on you the Divine judgments, and I shudder to see that you seek not to avoid the storm which threatens to fall on you. But there is yet time, my most dear mother, to escape the vengeance of God; return to the obedience of Holy Church; humble yourself and acknowledge your fault, and God will show you mercy. I conjure you, accomplish the will of God and my desire, for indeed I do desire your salvation with all my heart, and soul, and strength; and gladly would I have come in person to tell you the truth with my tongue, for your salvation and God's honour. It is the goodness of God, Who loves you with an immense love, which urges me thus to write to you in profound sorrow. . . . Alas, my mother, have you no compassion for yourself? Willingly would I give my life to save you! Oh, how happy should I be to go and give my life to restore to you all the blessings of heaven and earth, and to take from you the weapon with which you are killing yourself. Alas! alas! let not my eyes have to shed torrents of tears over your poor

soul and body! I love your soul as though it were my own, and I see that it is dead; for it strikes a blow, not at Pope Urban only, but at the truth, at our Holy Faith!—that faith which I once thought to see carried to the infidels through your means!" (Letters 316, 317.)

In addressing the three Italian Cardinals, who, as we have seen, had endeavoured to hold themselves neutral after the election of the Antipope, Catherine used the same arguments as those which she had laid before the Queen. But in addition she set before them the special duties which might have been expected from them in their exceptional position. "When the others abandoned their Father," she says, "you, as his children, should have remained to be his support. Even though he made you some few reproaches, you ought not on that account to have given the example of revolt. In the eyes of God we are all equal, but to speak in the language of men, the Christ on earth is an Italian, and you are Italians also. The love of country, then, did not lead you astray as it did the Ultramontane Cardinals; and I can see no other explanation of your conduct but wounded self-love. You abandoned the truth out of resentment; you could not endure,—I will not say a just correction, but not so much as one rough word. You lifted your heads on high, and that was the cause of your revolt. Yes, we know and see the truth; before the Holy Father reproved you, you acknowledged him and did him homage as the Vicar of Christ; but your tree was planted in pride and nourished by self-love; and it is this that has deprived you of the light of reason."

Among others whom Catherine was most anxious to gain was Honorius Gaetano, Count of Fondi, whose adhesion to the cause of the Antipope had been entirely caused by private pique and resentment. He was governor both of the province of Campania and the city of Anagni, and Urban had deprived him of both offices, which he conferred on the Count's bitterest enemy, Thomas Santa Severina. This affront, offered to one of the most powerful nobles in Italy, had born disastrous fruits, and Catherine, while reproaching him for his ungenerous way of seeking revenge was careful to assure him of the loving pardon which he would

receive on his return to his allegiance. "We know," she says, "that Urban VI. is the true Pope; so that were he the most cruel father possible, and had he chased us from one end of the world to the other, we ought not to forget, or to persecute the truth. But your self-love has conceived indignation and brought forth wrath. Surely you must suffer in your conscience, for you were once an obedient son and firm support of Holy Church. . . . It is not only yourself on whom you inflict a deadly blow; but think of all the souls and bodies whose loss you will have to account for to the Sovereign Judge! For God's sake, do so no more; *to sin is human, but to persevere in sin is the part of the devil.* Be sure no fault committed against the Holy Church will ever remain unpunished. That is always clearly seen. Then I implore you, for the love of the Blood shed for you, return to your Father who will await you with open arms; for indeed he desires to show mercy to you and to all others who may seek for it." (Letter 192.)

Catherine's appeals to the Queen of Naples, to the Italian Cardinals, and to Honorius Gaetano, were fruitless in their result, but she was more successful in her efforts to hold to their allegiance the cities of Florence, Siena, Bologna, Perugia, and Venice, to all whose Magistrates she addressed letters as fervent as they were argumentative. During the early months of 1379 she was, in fact, devoting all her extraordinary energies to the support of Urban's cause, and when not engaged in more active labours on his behalf, she poured forth her soul in prayer, that God would defend his cause, and deliver the Church from the new and terrible calamity that had fallen on it. If we look at the collection of her Prayers printed at the end of the Dialogue, we find no fewer than six dated in the months of February and March of this year, and taken down from her lips by her disciples. The increasing difficulties of Urban's position in Rome, and the rapid spread of the dark cloud which overshadowed the Church, wrung her heart with agony unspeakable, and drew from her these ardent intercessions; and, in truth, the aspect of affairs was daily growing more and more alarming.

Whilst Catherine was using her influence with Urban to induce him to hold back from all violent measures, the Antipope Clement was busily engaged collecting troops and preparing for hostilities. He had the talents and the ardent military spirit of a secular prince; and badly as such accomplishments suited his sacred profession, they gained him favour among the wild soldiery whom he sought to gather round his standard. Tall of stature, with a handsome countenance and captivating address, Robert of Geneva was just the man to win popularity with the multitude; and his openhanded prodigality contrasted favourably enough in their eyes with the austere and simple habits of Pope Urban. By the commencement of the year 1379, therefore, he had succeeded in gathering together a considerable number of Gascon and Breton mercenaries, who audaciously entered the Roman territories and encamped at Marino, at a short distance from the city. Urban, on his part, had been fortunate enough to secure the services of Count Alberic di Balbiano, a man of low birth who had acquired the reputation of a skilful captain, and whose not inglorious ambition it was to command none but native Italians, and by their means to drive out of his country those hordes of foreign mercenaries who preyed upon her vitals. His Company, which bore the title of the "Company of St. George," numbered no more than four thousand foot-soldiers, and as many horse, but they were all well-trained veterans, and being joined by Sir John Hawkwood, they appeared fairly able to cope with their opponents. The schismatics, meanwhile, were ravaging the whole surrounding country, and driving before them the terrified inhabitants, who took refuge within the city walls, thus increasing the alarm and confusion of the citizens. Catherine beheld it all in profound affliction, and tears became her bread day and night, as she ceased not to cry to God that He would restore peace to His Church. The danger was augmented by the fact, that the Castle of St. Angelo was still in the hands of the partisans of Clement; but acting by Catherine's advice, John Cenci, Senator of Rome, had already opened negotiations with Rostaing for its surrender. Deeply as the Saint lamented the necessity of having recourse to

the sword in defence of the cause of God, yet, when warlike operations became inevitable, she did not withhold her words of encouragement to the combatants. With Hawkwood she had already had relations, and both by him and his wild comrades her name was held in the utmost veneration. And she now addressed herself to Alberic likewise, and promised him that she and the other servants of God would not cease to offer their prayers for a blessing on his arms.

On the 29th of April a double attack on the Schismatic forces was concerted. While the Roman citizens attempted an assault on the Castle of St. Angelo, Alberic and his troops sallied forth from the gates and fell on the Bretons encamped at Marino. Though far outnumbered by their adversaries, the Urbanists gained a complete victory; and Alberic re-entering Rome in triumph, such consternation took possession of Rostaing and his garrison, that they at once surrendered the fortress into the hands of the conqueror. This double victory, gained on the same day, filled the hearts of the Romans with inexpressible joy, nor did they hesitate to ascribe their success as due to the prayers of St. Catherine. Only a few hours previously they had been ready to abandon themselves to despair, beholding the city surrounded on all sides by their enemies; and now they saw themselves delivered as by a miracle, and the citadel, whence their peace and safety had so long been threatened, restored to their own keeping. It was a success which might well rouse the coldest hearts to gratitude, and Catherine was resolved that the devotion of the people should be moved in the right direction. She saw in the late victory an occasion for raising their hearts to God, of confirming them in sentiments of loyalty to His Vicar, and of rendering to His Holy Name a tribute of honour, in reparation for the thousand outrages it had endured during this disastrous time. She therefore entreated the Pope to order a special and solemn act of thanksgiving, and himself to take part in it before the eyes of all the people. Urban was then living at Santa Maria in Trastevere, and Catherine proposed that he should make thence a solemn procession to the church of St. Peter's, walking

barefoot, and attended by a great number, both of clergy and of the faithful. It was a touching spectacle, and the populace failed not to remark that no Roman Pontiff had been known to perform such an act of penance and devotion since the time of Stephen IV. in the eighth century. And whilst the pious were edified, the hearts of all were filled with joyful satisfaction at seeing the Pontiff once more able to take up his residence in his own palace, secure from the insults and attacks of an intrusive foreign garrison. Catherine also was full of joy at the accomplishment of this devout ceremony, and she expressed her sentiments in a letter to the Pontiff, dated the 30th of May, in which she says, "We have witnessed within the last four weeks what admirable things have been worked by the power of God by means of a vile creature; and we have seen clearly that they were wrought by Him, and not by the power of man. Let us give Him glory, and testify our gratitude. And, indeed, I have been filled with joy at beholding with my eyes that holy procession, the like of which has not been performed since the most remote ages. I rejoice that our sweet Mother Mary and St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, have restored you to your rightful residence. May the Eternal Truth grant you to make in your garden a garden of the servants of God, who may have nothing else to do than to pray for the prosperity of the Church and of your Holiness; for these are the soldiers who will obtain for you a complete victory."

She also exerted herself to obtain a proper acknowledgment from the Roman Magistrates and people, of the services rendered both by the troops and by John Cenci. "I desire," she says, "that you should be grateful to the Company whose members have been the instruments of Christ; assist them in their wants, specially the poor wounded. Be kind and charitable to them that you may preserve their aid, and not give them occasion to turn against you. You are bound to this as well from motives of gratitude as of prudence. . . . I think you have been a little ungrateful in respect of John Cenci. I know with what zeal and generosity, merely to please God and serve us, he abandoned

everything in order to deliver you from the danger that threatened you on the side of the Castle of St. Angelo. He acted with great prudence; yet now, not only does no one show him the least gratitude, but there are envious calumnies raised against him. This is not right." (Letter 196.)

At the same time, she addressed herself to Alberic and his companions in a letter written on the 6th of May, which is one of four which she is known to have dictated on that same day, so marvellous was the activity of her mind, and her continual application to the affairs to which she had devoted herself. Her letter is addressed "To Count Alberic of Balbiano, Captain General of the Company of St. George, and to the other Chiefs." After expressing her hopes that they may be rewarded for their sufferings in the good cause, she continues, "Who is the Master for whom you went forth to the field of battle? It was Christ crucified, the Eternal Sovereign whose greatness none but Himself can understand. Oh, my sons, you came to the battle-field like good knights, to give your life for the love of the Life, and to shed your blood for love of the Blood of Christ. Behold a time of new martyrs! You have been the first to shed your blood, and what will be your reward? Even life eternal. Courage, then, you serve the Truth, and the Truth will make you free! and the better to call down God's blessing on your holy enterprise, have a good intention; take for the motive of your actions God's honour, and the defence of the faith of Holy Church; and prepare yourselves by a good confession, for you know sin calls down God's anger, and hinders the success of our works. In your position as Chief, give your followers an example of the fear of God. If all whom you command have not time to go to confession, let them at least do so in desire. Surround yourself with good advisers. Choose for your officers brave men, as faithful and conscientious as you can find, for it is good officers who make good soldiers. Be on your guard against treason both within and without; and the first thing, morning and evening, offer yourselves to our sweet Mother Mary, begging her to be your advocate and defence, and to let no treason harm you, for the love of her dear Son. Courage then in Christ

Jesus! Always have His Blood present to your minds! Fight under the banner of the Cross, and think that the blood of the martyrs cries for you in the presence of God. Be grateful for the benefits you have received from Him and from the glorious knight, St. George, whose name you bear, and who will guard and defend you till death! We, on our part, will do as Moses did: whilst the people fought, Moses prayed, and whilst he prayed, the people triumphed over their enemies—we will do the same.[1] Be pleased to read this yourself, and also to the Captains." (Letter 219.)

It has been said above that this letter was one of four, written or dictated by Catherine on the same day. The other three were addressed to the Roman Magistrates, to the Queen of Naples, and to King Charles of France. This last-named epistle is one of the most remarkable of her compositions; and to explain the occasion on which it was written, we must retrace our history a little, and see what success had attended Raymund of Capua after his departure from Rome. In spite of the numerous galleys of the Schismatics and of the Queen of Naples which scoured the seas with the purpose of intercepting any envoys who might be sent by Urban to the King of France, he managed to get safely to Genoa, stopping on his way at Pisa, where he received a letter of encouragement from Catherine. From Genoa he got as far as Ventimiglia, where he was warned by one of the fathers of his own Order not to proceed farther, as an ambuscade had been laid for him which it was impossible for him to escape. Indeed, one of his companions did actually fall into the hands of the enemy; and on inquiry, it proved, that every road to France was so strictly guarded by troops, as to exclude all hope of his being able to elude their vigilance; for he could not make his way into the French

[1] The last paragraph in this letter is quoted by Rinaldi, in proof that the victory of Marino was due to St. Catherine's prayers. He overlooked the circumstance that it was written a whole week after that event. Maimbourg, the partisan of the Schism, takes occasion from this blunder to cast discredit on the authenticity of the letter altogether; but it is evident that the Saint is not referring to prayers offered before the battle of Marino, but to those with which she promises to help Alberic in his *future* undertakings in defence of the Church.

dominions without passing through Provence, which at that time was subject to Joanna of Naples, and filled with her spies and emissaries. In this perplexity he determined on returning to Genoa; whence he wrote to Urban, stating the facts, and asking for further instructions. He also sent a letter to Catherine, relating his adventures, and rejoicing with great simplicity over his late providential escape. From Urban he received a command to remain where he was for the present, and use his eloquence to keep the people of Genoa from joining the Schism; but Catherine's reply was not precisely a congratulation. Had he been cut to pieces by the Schismatics, or cast into a dungeon, she would have rejoiced over him with holy exultation. But that he, a man, the Envoy of the Christ on earth, should have cared for his life in the cause of God, and turned his steps backward in order to save it; and most of all, that he should have rejoiced, and asked her to rejoice with him over his escape, was more than she could endure or understand; and she addressed a letter to the poor Father, which must have greatly qualified his satisfaction. "God," she says, "has desired to make you know your imperfection, and to show you that you were a child at the breast, and not a man who feeds on bread; for if you had had teeth with which to eat that bread, He would have given it to you, as He did to your companion. But you were not found worthy of fighting on the field of battle, so you were put aside like a child; you fled of your own accord, and now you rejoice at the escape which God has granted to your weakness. Oh, my poor Father! what a happiness it would have been for your soul, and for mine also, if with your blood you had consolidated but one stone of the Holy Church! Truly we have reason to groan and lament that our want of virtue has deprived us of such a grace! Ah, let us lose our milk teeth, and try to get the good strong teeth of hatred and of love." (Letter 100.)

In his reply Raymund seems to have urged the insurmountable obstacles in the way of his journey and the impossibility of escaping detection; but Catherine could not accept the excuse. "If you could not pursue your way walking," she says, "you should have crawled on hands and feet; if you could not travel as a friar you

should have done so as a pilgrim; if you had no money, you should have begged your way." (Letter 101.)

The failure of Raymund's attempt for a moment suggested the thought that Catherine herself should undertake the journey to Paris. Many things seemed to indicate that she was the most likely person to gain a favourable hearing from Charles and his councillors. She had already been invited to his Court; and her words to him at the very moment when she was using her influence to carry out a policy to which he was strongly opposed, had been received with respect and favour. The Duke of Anjou had professed himself her firm friend and disciple, and as to the dangers to be apprehended on the journey on the part of the Schismatics and their Neapolitan allies, it is perhaps the truest statement to say that they attracted rather than dismayed her. The chance they offered her of steeping her white robe in the blood of martyrdom was in her eyes the most glorious privilege to which any mortal could aspire, and she therefore cheerfully placed herself at the disposal of the Sovereign Pontiff. We are ignorant of the obstacles which opposed themselves to this project. Probably Urban felt her presence necessary to him, but however it was, Catherine submitted with her usual self-abandonment, and set herself to supply by writing what she was unable to say by word of mouth. She therefore addressed to King Charles the letter of which we have spoken, and which has drawn from Papirio Massonio an eloquent word of admiration.[1]

The letter is of great length, and we shall give but a summary of its contents. She endeavours to show first how self-love is the real root of injustice, and the cause why men in power who seek human interests persecute the Church. She expresses her wonder how a prince so renowned for his Catholic piety could have suffered himself to be guided by false councillors in a matter of such grave importance. Then she sets before him the chain of arguments which proved beyond the possibility of doubt that the election of Urban had been true and valid. The ground on

[1] *Nihil gravius, nihil elegantius, aut concipi animo, aut scribi ab ullo illius temporis viro certe potuisset* (*Annal ad.* 1378: *Lib.* 4).

which they pretended to call it invalid was that it had been made out of fear. But the person whom, under the influence of fear, they had put forth to the people as having been elected was the Cardinal of St. Peter's, who himself declared that Urban had been lawfully elected. Then for five months afterwards they confirmed their election by repeated public acts. They announced the elevation of Urban to the Sovereigns; they did him homage; they crowned him, and asked favours of him. If they did all this, knowing that he was not really Pope, they convicted themselves of a prodigious crime. "How! they, the columns of the Church, they who are established to spread the faith; *they*, out of fear of temporal death to drag us with them to death eternal! But the fact is, that they acknowledged him as true Pope until he began to reprove their vices. As soon as he showed that he was resolved to correct scandalous abuses, they revolted and became renegades. If I speak thus of them," she continues, "I speak not against their persons, but against the Schism which they have brought into the world; against their cruelty to their own poor souls and the souls of those who will perish by their means. Had they feared God, Pope Urban might have done more than he did do, and they would have borne it patiently, and died a thousand deaths rather than have rebelled against him. And you may see that all the true servants of God remain obedient to him and acknowledge him as Sovereign Pontiff. Call such persons to your councils to explain the truth to you and enlighten your ignorance. Do not let yourself be moved by temporal interests; if you do, the result will be more fatal to you than to any one else. Have compassion on the many souls whom you are delivering up to error. Yet if you desire, you need not be deceived, for you have near you the fountain of science;[1] have recourse to it, and you know what will become of your kingdom if you consult conscientious men, free from servile fear, and caring only for the truth. Oh, my dear Father, enter into yourself; you must die, and you know not how soon,[2] think

[1] The University of Paris.

[2] Charles, in fact, died the next year, protesting on his deathbed that he

only of God and the truth, not of private passion or national interests. Before God there is no distinction of nations, for we all came forth from the same thought; we were all created in His image and likeness, and were all redeemed in the Precious Blood of His Son. Pardon me if I have said too much; I would far rather speak than write to you, for the love that I have of your salvation." (Letter 187.)

Charles was probably never suffered to receive this letter. Almost as the Saint was writing it, the Royal Brief was sent to the University of Paris, requiring them to consider and decide on the claims of the rival Pontiffs in terms that could hardly be interpreted in any other sense than a command to give their verdict in favour of the Antipope. The too facile instruments of the royal will knew well what was expected of them. The College of the Sorbonne indeed had already pronounced in favour of Urban, but on the 30th of May, pressed by fresh letters from the king, the majority declared that Clement VII. was to be accepted as true and lawful Pontiff; the English "nation" in the University, to their eternal honour, withholding all part in the transaction. Had the decision been unanimous, which it was far from being, it is obvious to observe that the University was not a tribunal that could dictate laws to the Church. But at that period immense weight attached to its decisions; and from the miserable day when this decree was promulgated, the Great Schism of the West may be said to have been fairly accomplished. There can be no doubt that had Charles from the first firmly opposed the rebellious Cardinals, their scheme would have been nipped in the bud. His vacillation in the first instance, followed by his actual adherence to their party, gave them the most formidable support; and hence, by most writers, he is represented as the chief promoter, if not the actual author of the Schism. In any case, this defection was so serious a blow to the cause of Urban, that it became necessary for him to seek among

had adhered to the cause of Clement through the advice of the Cardinals, and that in case he were mistaken, he desired to abide by the decision of the Universal Church, as expressed by a general Council.

the other Christian princes for some who would support his claims. There was one then reigning who seemed by his chivalrous character and tried devotion to be eminently fitted for being chosen as the champion of the Faith. This was Louis, King of Hungary and Poland, great grandson of Charles of Anjou, the brother of St. Louis of France. Thus he was closely connected with the Queen of Naples, and was brother to that Andrew of Hungary, the first husband of Joanna, whom she had caused to be smothered in the Castle dell' Uovo; while his cousin Charles Durazzo had been declared heir to the kingdom of Naples by the Queen and the States General; though since then she had given her preference to the Duke of Anjou. By his wisdom and valour Louis had earned the surname of the Great: he had been victorious against the Tartars and other enemies of the faith, and had received from Pope Innocent VI. the title of "Gonfalonier of Holy Church." The Schismatic Cardinals had made every effort to gain him over to their side, but without success; he would never depart from the obedience of Urban, and at the first outbreak of the Schism had greatly exerted himself to stop its further progress. To him Urban naturally turned for help. The sentence of excommunication was still hanging suspended over the head of Joanna of Naples; should she by her obstinacy incur that sentence she would forfeit her kingdom, which was a fief of the Holy See; and Urban proposed to invest Prince Charles at once with the royal dignity, and invited both him and his cousin King Louis to come into Italy and act in defence of the Church. Catherine likewise wrote to both these princes; and whilst soliciting their support, it is worthy of notice that she seems to deprecate extreme measures, and clings to the lingering hope that even yet Joanna may be spared. "Much good," she says, writing to the King, "will result from your coming hither; *perhaps even the truth will triumph without the necessity of using human force, and this poor queen may be delivered from her obstinacy either by fear or love.* You well know how she has been spared by the Christ on earth, who was unwilling to deprive her actually of what by her conduct she had forfeited; he awaited her repent-

ance, and that out of consideration for you." (Letter 188.) To Charles Durazzo she also writes inviting him to come to the aid of the Church, as was becoming one in whose veins ran the blood of St. Louis; but she makes no allusion to the proposal for investing him with the forfeited kingdom; and it is probable that she yet hoped by her influence with Urban, and by fresh appeals to Joanna, to avert so terrible a calamity as a warlike invasion.

In the meanwhile that princess was far from evincing any signs of repentance; on the contrary, she was acting as the open partisan and protector of the Antipope. After the defeat of his troops at Marino, Clement felt himself no longer safe in the Roman provinces, and took refuge in the kingdom of Naples. His military spirit deserted him in the hour of need, and he arrived at the Castle of Spelonca half crazed with terror. Joanna received him with a great display of respect, and conducted him to her famous Castle dell' Uovo, causing a bridge to be constructed in the sea, on the spot where he was to disembark from his galley. He was treated with royal pomp, and received the homage of the queen and her brilliant court; and amid a series of splendid and costly festivities, consoled himself as well as he might for his late disaster.

But the Neapolitan people were far from sharing the sentiments of their sovereign. They clung to the obedience of Urban, venerating him as true Pope, and loving him as their own fellow-countryman; and they regarded the honours shown his rival as nothing short of sacrilegious. Andrea Ravignano, one of the queen's courtiers, hearing an artisan giving vent to his indignation in no measured terms, commanded him to be silent, and his command not being attended to, he had the base cowardice to ride down the poor fellow, and strike out one of his eyes. This was the signal for the people to rise; they assembled in crowds, shouting, "Long live Pope Urban!" and in a few hours Naples was in their hands. The Archbishop appointed by Urban, who had been thrust out of his see, was brought back in triumph, and the schismatic intruder chased out of the city. Clement, terrified

at so unexpected a storm, again took flight, and hurried first to Gaeta, and thence to the shores of Provence; where establishing himself at Avignon with the Cardinals of his party, he felt at last in safety, and did not again return to Italy.

The revolt of the Neapolitans seemed to cause a momentary hesitation in the mind of the unhappy Joanna. Civil war had broken out in her dominions, and there were plenty of ambitious and unscrupulous princes who would be likely to take advantage of such a crisis to possess themselves of the territories of an heirless queen. In her doubts and fears her thoughts turned towards Catherine, to whom she addressed several letters, assuring her that "the words of a Saint had not been lost on her, and that now she clearly recognised Urban to be the lawful Pope." To satisfy her revolted subjects whose loyalty to the Holy See it was impossible to tamper with, she even despatched ambassadors to Rome to negotiate her reconciliation, and everywhere circulated the report that she had separated from the party of the Antipope. Catherine's singular interest in this princess made her receive the intelligence of her retractation with extraordinary joy. She wrote to some of her disciples, bidding them rejoice with her, because "the heart of Pharaoh was at last softened, and God was working admirable things in her regard." And with the view of confirming her in her good resolutions she despatched to Naples two of her most trustworthy disciples, the Abbot Lisolo and Neri di Landoccio, who seem to have reached their destination in the August of 1379.

But it soon became apparent that Joanna's submission had been feigned. With the detestable bad faith which marked her character, she had only sought to gain time, while her husband Otho was collecting a body of German troops in order to quell the insurgents. She had equally deceived the Pope and her own subjects; and so soon as she believed herself secure against insurrection she threw off the mask, recalled her ambassadors from Rome, where Urban had given them the most gracious reception, and again declared herself the partisan of Clement. Catherine saw with profound sorrow that she could no longer

interfere to save the unhappy queen from the fate which she so blindly courted, yet she could not abandon her without a last parting word. In this sublime letter Catherine's entire heart appears unveiled. She is pleading with the queen for her own soul; and not for her own soul only, but for her subjects, on whom her persistence in rebellion would entail all the horrors of a bloody war. There is not a word of bitterness or reproach in the whole letter; she still gives her the sweet name of *mother*, and reminds her of the many years during which she had governed her people wisely. "If you care not for your own salvation," she says, "think of them who have enjoyed so many years of peace under your wise rule, and who are now miserably divided, making war on each other, and tearing each other like wild beasts. Does it not break your heart to see such divisions? One holds for the White Rose, and another for the Red,[1] one for the truth, and the other for falsehood: yet all were created alike by the unspotted Rose of God's Eternal Will, and all were regenerated to grace in the Red Rose of the Blood of Christ. Neither you nor any one else can give them those two glorious Roses; none can do that but our Mother the Holy Church and he who holds the keys of the Blood; how then can you consent to deprive them of that which you cannot give them? The second fault you committed after your repentance was worse than the first, for you had acknowledged the truth and your error, and you had sought as an obedient daughter the mercy and pardon of your Father; and after that you did even worse than before. Is it that your heart was not sincere, and that you only dissimulated? for I received a letter from you in which you confessed that Pope Urban was truly the Sovereign Pontiff, and that you desired to submit to him. Oh, for the love of God, confess your fault sincerely; for confession to be good must be accompanied with contrition and satisfaction.

[1] The White and Red Roses were the symbols of the Urbanists and Clementists in the kingdom of Naples, and it is supposed that from thence these same symbols were carried into England by some of Hawkwood's followers, and adopted in the civil wars which broke out so soon afterwards in that country.

Where is the truth that should always be found on the lips of a Queen? Her word should be as sure and trustworthy as the Gospel, and when she has made a promise to God, she should not change." Then she assures her that the Pope is even yet desirous to spare her and treat her with indulgence; she reminds her that she is no longer young, and that the world therefore must soon pass away; that death is not far off, and what kind of death? "Be not cruel to yourself, lest at the last moment you hear the terrible words, 'Thou hast not remembered Me in life, and in death I will not remember thee; thou didst not answer to My call when there was yet time, and now the time is past, and no hope remains.'" (Letter 318.)

The sentence of excommunication was in fact pronounced against Joanna, though not until the early part of 1380, a very short time before the death of the Saint. Catherine's charitable advocacy, and Urban's own desire to give her every chance of repentance, delayed the stroke of justice until, in the solemn words above quoted, "no hope remained." Nor was it even then pronounced until Joanna had actually conspired against the life of Urban, and despatched Rinaldo Orsini to Rome at the head of an armed force to seize his person. Raymund speaks of this in the Legend, and informs us of the atrocious cruelties which were perpetrated by the Queen's emissaries on all the unoffending inhabitants who fell into their hands. Some were fastened to trees, and left there to perish by famine; others loaded with chains and carried captives to the camp, in hopes of obtaining a ransom.[1] These facts must be taken into consideration, as well as the peculiar relations of Naples with the Holy See, before we can estimate the act by which Urban finally declared the queen to have forfeited her kingdom, and bestowed it on Charles Durazzo. The history of his expedition against Naples does not properly belong to our present subject, for it took place two years after Catherine's death, and is only here alluded to as displaying the fulfilment of those

[1] Leg., Part 3, ch. v. Raymund says that many of those thus tortured obtained their deliverance in a miraculous manner after invoking the aid of St. Catherine.

repeated warnings which she had urged on Joanna as to the terrible fate which most surely awaited her, unless she repented while there was yet time. Charles was received with enthusiasm by the people of Naples, and found himself master of the kingdom almost without a blow. Joanna fell into the hands of the conqueror, who, as a stern act of justice, became the avenger of his cousin's murder; and in the very Castle dell' Uovo, where that crime had been committed, the guilty and unhappy princess suffered the same ignominious death.

CHAPTER IV

England and the Schism, 1378–1379

WE have reserved for a separate chapter a brief notice of the part taken by our own country in the affairs of the Schism, which is not without some points of special interest, as connected, in a certain way, with the history of St. Catherine: and we shall set these facts before the reader with the more satisfaction, because it is impossible to deny that, on this occasion at least, the King, the Parliament, and the clergy of England, acted with a good faith and clear-sighted justice which even in Catholic times did not always distinguish our national dealings with the Apostolic See.

The Bull in which Pope Urban announced to the sovereign and clergy of England his election (which he calls *communis et concors electio*) is dated April 19th, 1378. Various documents in exercise of his authority were issued by him during the following month, and are to be found printed in the third volume of Wilkins' Concilia. On the 9th of August in the same year the Encyclical letter addressed to the faithful by the rebellious Cardinals was received in England, declaring that they had elected Urban "to avoid peril of death, which was imminent by reason of the fury of the people." In the following October a Parliament was held at Gloucester, to which there came envoys from the Pope, declaring the great straits he was in, and the injuries he was suffering from the apostate Cardinals, and beseeching the king and lords of England to succour him. There likewise came thither other envoys from the Cardinals, bearing letters sealed with ten seals; making strong allegations on their

side, and also petitioning for succour. "By the favour of God who disposes all things justly," says the monk of St. Albans, "the apostate envoys were refused admittance, and the Papal envoys were received, and aid promised to the Pope in due time. Then the Archbishop of Canterbury, considering the falsehoods made public through the writings of the Cardinals, and the manifest errors into which they had fallen, moved by the Spirit of God, took up this theme, 'There shall be one Shepherd' (Ezech. xxxvii. 24), and he so clearly declared their error to the people as evidenced by their own words, that their malice became evident to all, and their execrable crime unveiled."[1]

Meanwhile a reply was despatched to the Cardinals written in the king's name, and equally decisive in its terms. It runs as follows:[2]

"Richard, King of England, and Lord of Ireland, &c., to such Cardinals: not as you write to us, by the Divine mercy, Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, but rather by the Divine malediction thundering over you, who as ravenous wolves are attacking the whole flock of Christ, and as crafty foxes who desire to destroy the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts. The foolish tenor of your letters, which at the instigation of the enemy you have rashly addressed to each and all of the provinces of Christendom, wounding thereby our inmost souls, has in no way injured our faith; but has filled us with sorrow of heart at so horrible a scandal, newly raised in the Church of God. But woe to you by whom this scandal has been brought about! *For the face of our Mother the Church has become pale;* and we believe that this pallor, caused by trouble, is owing to your crime, a crime unheard of in all past ages. For you who were regarded as the teachers of the law, have not shown yourselves the true servants of God, but sacrilegious men. The blush of your shame is spread abroad,

[1] *Chronicon Angliæ*, by a monk of St. Alban's, p. 212.

[2] Walsingham, *in Richard II.*, 1378, quoted by Pinaldi. The whole letter (which we have given abridged) is also printed by Baluze (*Vitæ Paparum Avenionensium*, Tom. i., p. 554), but with the error of substituting for the name *Richard* that of *Edward* who had died a year previously.

whilst the very confines of Christendom are set on fire by your scandalous acts. Oh, that unhappy and detestable ambition of yours, which seeks to rend the seamless garment of the Lord, which has not fallen by lot to your disposal; and to part that which suffers no division, but rather rejoices in unity! Wicked servants! You shall be judged out of your own mouths! For you have declared to us by your letters the manner in which the recent election of the Sovereign Pontiff was celebrated; saying that a lawless multitude of armed men surrounded your conclave, uttering terrible and deadly threats against you unless you elected an Italian or a Roman; but not limiting you to any person whom they compelled you to elect. It is therefore manifest that the person whom you yourselves grant that you elected, was elected freely and not under compulsion. And we therefore firmly hold, and will hold, that his election was, and is rightly and canonically celebrated; and we firmly adhere to him who was thus elected, enthroned, and crowned, as to the true Head of Holy Church, and successor of St. Peter, and the true Vicar of Christ on earth; and we humbly promise to obey his words and admonitions. And we detest your pernicious rebellion and sacrilegious and heretical contumacy, which led many to follow your damnable example and share your disgrace; for whereas you were placed in the battle-array of the Church, as warriors and champions of the orthodox Christian faith and of the liberty of the Church, wearing red hats upon your heads in token of the constancy and boldness wherewith you ought fearlessly to fight for justice even unto death, how has the fear of death so suddenly come upon you and conquered you, as that you should suffer justice to perish? How is it that you who call yourselves pillars of the Church are become infirm and weak, so that you cannot support the roof and prevent it from falling? . . . For the rest, let not your foolish blindness and blind folly imagine that those words in your letters which seem to savour of piety and zeal for the house of God will move or persuade us in any way to take part with you. We have sufficiently understood that those words are seasoned with the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees. You

name to us the place which you have chosen as suitable for your crime, clearly showing that you have left the true Head of the Church, *and have become members of the devil.*"

Rinaldi, who quotes this letter from Walsingham, observes that "the English burnt with pious zeal against the traitors to the Church, the justice of Urban's election being made evident to them by clear proofs, *drawn from the very testimony of the Schismatics, which we adduce from their own records.*" He then proceeds to give a document which we shall quote, in spite of its length, as it furnishes a notable and valuable contribution to our ecclesiastical history.

Reasons of the English.

1. Because the Romans did not press the Cardinals to elect any person in particular; they demanded only what was reasonable—that a Roman or an Italian should be given them. Therefore, as regarded the person to be elected the Cardinals were free. Having then elected the Archbishop of Bari, *whom the Romans had not demanded*, it is clear that they elected him freely. He is then Pope. It may be stated thus: the Cardinals were not forced by the Romans to elect any one in particular, for they demanded no one in particular. They elected Bartholomew of Bari, therefore they elected him freely; they were constrained as to the nation, but not as to the person, of him who was to be elected.

2. Because the Archbishop refused earnestly to accept the Papal dignity, and only accepted it at last at the instance of the Cardinals. Since then they prayed him to accept it, they did not elect him unwillingly; therefore they elected him freely. He is then Pope.

3. Because according to the relation of the Archbishops, Bishops, masters in theology, and other doctors then in Rome, the English have learnt that even before entering the conclave they unanimously named him Pope, not having been able to agree on any of the Cardinals.

4. And because, after they had entered the conclave, they made a *triple* election of him, in order that there might be no doubt on the matter. His election was therefore perfectly free.

5. Because they also freely crowned him, as is manifest from the fact that the Cardinals who were out of the city returned to be present at his coronation.

6. Because, moreover, the Cardinals remained in peace with him for several months, received Holy Communion from his hands, and asked him for benefices and other favours for themselves and their friends. Now, it is not likely that they would have done this if they had known he was not Pope. He therefore is so truly.

7. Because the Roman populace did not certainly force the Cardinals to write letters commendatory of the said Archbishop. Those which they wrote and sent to the princes and great personages, to announce that he had been elected Pope, and to declare his praises, were written freely. Therefore he is truly Pope.

8. Because, for no earthly reason ought the Cardinals to deceive the Church of God. Now, one of these two things must be true: either the Cardinals knew that Bartholomew Prignano was Pope, or they knew that he was not. If the first be true, we have proved our point; if the second, they have deceived the whole Church of God. The consequence is manifest; for there is no fear that can compel a man of constancy to sin mortally. But to deceive the Holy Church of God is to sin mortally. Therefore, they are no longer worthy of credit.

9. Because the Grand Penitentiary sealed the letters of his tribunal with his seal, bearing the inscription: "Given at Rome, in the first year of Pope Urban VI." He has thus given evidence with all possible authority that Urban is Pope.

10. Because the Cardinal electors wrote unanimously to the Parliament of the King of England that they had elected the Archbishop of Bari, saying, "We *elected* the Archbishop of Bari, only we did it out of fear." Then they did elect him. Now such fear would not vitiate their election, because it was not impressed upon them with a view to their electing this particular person for

whom the Romans did not ask: for no one can be forced to *elect;* election being an act of free will to which no man can be forced;[1] and even before they incurred that fear, they had named the Archbishop as the person they intended to elect.

11. Because the Romans did not demand that the Cardinals should affirm by their own seals, and by their public acts, that the Archbishop Bartholomew was Pope. If they did this, they did it freely. Therefore, the English people are obliged to believe him to be Pope.

12. Because one of the canons says, "If any one be elected Pope, either by money, or by a military or popular tumult, *without the unanimous consent of the clergy*," &c. If therefore, the consent be unanimous, the election is made, even though there may have been a popular or military tumult. We see this in the case of Gregory V., who was elected Pope at the instance of the Emperor, and acknowledged to be duly elected. We may equally say of the Archbishop of Bari that, even though there was a popular tumult at the time of his election, there was, nevertheless, the unanimous consent of the Cardinals to his election.

13. Because, moreover, it was revealed to a certain holy hermit of England, who dwells in the place where the Brother Hermits of St. Augustine took their origin, that Bartholomew of Bari ought to be received as Pope. For it is said that he wrote three letters to England, urged by the Holy Spirit; one for the government of the kingdom, another for the reformation of his Order, and a third, in which he relates that whilst he was celebrating Mass it was shown him in the Sacred Host that Bartholomew of Bari was the true Pope; and in that letter he exhorts all persons whom his letters shall reach, to hold as true Pope the said Bartholomew

[1] The meaning here seems to be that, in saying "We *elected* the Archbishop of Bari," the Cardinals had unconsciously committed themselves. For they might have been forced to *name*, but not to *elect*, *i.e.*, not to make choice of any one, which is an interior act of the mind to which they could not be compelled. Yet in saying they had *elected* him, they implied that they had thus made choice of him.

of Bari, putting aside all doubts according to what has been divinely revealed to him.

14. Because, moreover, the common people say we ought to believe as our prelates, the Archbishops and Bishops, masters in theology, and doctors of the sacred canons inform us. But these tell us that under pain of the greater excommunication, and pain of deprivation of all our goods, spiritual and temporal, we are bound to believe Bartholomew of Bari to be Pope. Therefore we hold him to be Pope. Moreover he was the first elected; therefore he is Pope.

15. Because, if, after having elected him, the Cardinals have now separated from him, it is said to be for three causes. First, because he was determined to maintain the rights of the King of England, and to show him justice, and not unjustly to favour the King of France against him. Secondly, because he desired that each Cardinal should restore the title of his Cardinalate to Rome. Thirdly, because he would prevent them from going about with excessive pomp, and living dissolutely, irreligiously, and prodigally, as they had been wont to do. Moved, therefore, by these things, the Cardinals withdrew themselves from so much holiness and justice.

16. Because, moreover, it is commonly said, that the Antipope Clement is a man of blood, having ordered many persons to be put to death, and made himself a leader of armed men. Therefore it seems to us that he ought not to have been elected Pope, according to the 22nd chapter of the First Book of Paralipomenon wherein it is said: "The word of the Lord came unto David, saying, thou hast shed much blood and fought many battles; therefore thou canst not build a house to My Name, after shedding so much blood."[1]

Rinaldi, who quotes these "Reasons" at length, considers it probable that the last five were added somewhat later than the rest. If we take the first eleven and consider them simply in the

[1] Rinaldi, 1378, No. 51, quoted from Tom. i. De Schis. p. 32. Rohrbacher has cited this remarkable document (Vol. xxi. pp. 22, 23), omitting, however, four of the "reasons," and considerably abridging the remainder.

light of a logical argument, it is impossible not to be struck by their force and lucidity. It is manifest that those who guided the English councils of State had not drawn up these reasons without thoroughly and accurately acquainting themselves with the history of the whole transaction. Rohrbacher has observed that "the nation whose zeal most resembled the zeal of St. Catherine of Siena, was undoubtedly England." But they not only resembled her by their zeal: they exactly reproduced her line of argument. There is an identity in the very language used, and the points taken notice of in this State document of England, and in the letters of the Saint which, to say the least, indicates some common source of information. This similarity is also observable in the letter addressed to the Cardinals by the King and Parliament of England, which has been quoted a few pages back, in which we find the expression of "the face of the Church growing pale," the Sovereign Pontiff spoken of as "Christ," and the Schismatics as "members of the devil," all which terms recall, in a striking manner, the language of St. Catherine.

We have seen her addressing her closely-reasoned arguments to kings and princes, magistrates and republics; and the question suggests itself, did she despatch any such letters to England, and if she did, may they not have had their influence, as in other quarters, so also in the English Parliament? The inquiry is one of great interest, and in reply we are able to affirm positively that such a letter was despatched to the King of England. The proof of this assertion is contained in a letter addressed by Stephen Maconi, from Siena, to Neri di Landoccio, then with St. Catherine in Rome. It is dated June 22, 1379, and speaking of certain letters which he has asked his brother secretary to send to him, he says: "That was the third letter; the second contained the news of the Emperor, of which you promised to send me the copy; but I never had it. I also wrote to Richard at Florence, as you told me; but that other letter, *together with the copy of that which went to the King of England*, I have never had. You tell me to procure it, but I do not know from whom."[1]

[1] Lettere dei discepoli di Sta. Caterina, No. 13.

Many researches have been made among the English State papers with a view of recovering this letter, but hitherto without success. But the fact remains that St. Catherine did hold communication with Richard II. or his councillors at this momentous crisis, nor is it to be supposed that they who attached such weight to the authority of an anonymous hermit as to adduce his testimony before the Parliament of the realm in support of their arguments, should not have given due consideration to the words of one who enjoyed so great a reputation as St. Catherine. But the hermit, if anonymous in the Parliamentary document, is no stranger to us. Our readers will at once have recognised in him our old friend F. William Flete, who from his solitude at Lecceto ("the place where the Brother Hermits of St. Augustine took their origin") had sent his letters of admonition and warning to his countrymen; and whose fame for learning and sanctity had secured from them so respectful a hearing. Here then is the link which unites this page in our national history with the story of St. Catherine. Her words, and those of her most devoted disciple, were heard and listened to in the Councils of England: they had their weight in keeping the English steady in their loyalty to the See Apostolic; and we hold it as indisputable, that they communicated to those who drew up this remarkable document, some of the arguments which are there put forth in terms identical with those which we have seen used by St. Catherine herself.

It is a little remarkable that the "Rationes Anglicorum" are not to be found preserved in any of the English State records, and that the originals exist only among the papers of the Schismatics. How they came there it is not difficult to explain; for they were felt to be so forcible, and so damaging to the cause of Clement, that the best French legists were engaged to frame a reply. This reply, however, was an utter failure. It was solely based on the testimony of the Cardinals, and thus they were brought back to this terrible dilemma; these Cardinals, the sole witnesses that Urban's election was *invalid*, themselves, for five months, by act and deed had declared it *valid* to every court

and nation in Europe. Could such witnesses be received as worthy of credit?

But though we do not find the "Rationes" preserved in our State records, we find reference made to them in one of the Statutes of the realm. We shall give it verbatim, as it stands in the Rolls of Parliament, wherein some words have been injured and effaced by time.

"Item, pur ce q̃ nr̃e Sr̃ le Roi ad entenduz si bien par certains Lettres patentes nouvellement venues, de certains cardinalx rebeulx contre nostre seint Pere Urban a ore Pape, come autrement par cõe fame, q̃ division et discord etoit p entre nr̃e dit seint Pere et les ditz Cardinalx, lesqueux s'afforcent a toute leur pouir a deposer nr̃e dit seint Pere de l'estat de Pape, et de exciter et comoever par leur meins vraies sugestions les Rois, Princes, et le poeple Christien encontre lui a grant peril de leurs almes et a tres mal example: notre dit Sr̃ le Roi fist moustre les dc̃es lr̃es ax Prelatz, Seignrs, et autres grantz et sages esteantz au dit Parlement, et venes et entenduz les Lettres avant dc̃es, et ene meure deliberation sur la matiere, estoit par les ditz Prelatz pñunciez et publiez *par plusours grantz et notables resons* illoc̃qs monstrez en plein parlement sibien par matire trovez en dc̃es lettres come autrement, q̃ le dit Urban estoit duement esluz en Pape, et q̃ enzi il est et doit estre verraie pape et chef de seinte Eglise, et l'en doit accepter et obeir. Et a ce faire s'accorderent toutz les Prelatz Seignrs et Coẽs en le parlement a vaunt dit. Et en outtre est assentuz que toutes les Benefices et autres possessions q les ditz cardinalx rebellautz et toux autres leurs coadjutours, fautours, adherentz ou aucuns autres enemys de nr̃e dit Sr̃ le Roi et de son roialme ont denez leur pouir nr̃e dit Sr̃ le Roy Soient seisez es mains de mesme nre Sr̃ le Roi et q̃ nr̃e Sr̃ le Roi soit responduz des fruitz et profitz de mesmes les Benefices et possessions tant come ils dem ront en ses meins p la cause avant dit. Et auxent est ordenez q̃ si aucun lege du Roi ou autre deinz son Poair purchace provision, Benefice, ou autre grce d'aucun autre par nonn de Pape q̃ del dit nr̃e seint Pere Urban ou soit obeisant a aucun autre persone come a pape soit suis hors

de la protection nr̃e Sr̃ le Roi et ses biens et chatexx seisez come for factes."[1]

In the last portion of this statute is embodied the answer to a petition which the Commons presented in this same Parliament, to the effect that, whereas the realm had been greatly impoverished by so many rich benefices being given to foreigners, and that those who drew large sums out of these benefices let the houses attached to them go to ruin, &c., it will please our Lord the King to provide some remedy. To this petition the following answer was returned: "Ordeine est, et assentuz q̃ tous les Benefices de Cardinalx et autres rebelx au Pape Urban q'on est soient seisiz."

These proceedings took place in the second year of Richard II., that is in 1378, whence we see how prompt and vigorous was the action taken by the English Legislature, and that it can in no way be attributed, as Maimbourg represents, to the spiteful determination to take a course opposite to that taken by France; for France delayed any decisive action until the following year. But England at that time possessed great and patriotic statesmen, such as those whose measures of justice had procured for the Parliament of 1376 its title of "the Good Parliament," at the head of which was William of Wykeham, at that time Chancellor of the realm. And though he and the other members of the Good Parliament had suffered a temporary disgrace towards the close of the reign of Edward III., yet the first act of the new sovereign had been to restore him to favour; so that it is not to be doubted that his voice was heard in the Parliament which rejected and condemned the Schismatics; possibly, even his hand may have

[1] The above is copied from the Rolls of Parliament. It is likewise to be found printed, with an English translation, in the "Statutes of the Realm," Vol. i., fol. ii. This English translation is likewise given in Myddleton's "Great Boke of Statutes;" but it appears there with one notable alteration, showing the translation to have been made in the time of Henry VIII., and after the passing of the Act against acknowledgment of the Pope's supremacy; for wherever the word *Pope* occurs in the original, the expression is exchanged for *Bishop of Rome*. So far as we know, the document has not been inserted in any other printed edition or translation of the Statutes.

been employed in drawing up those "great and notable reasons" which have been laid before the reader.

Nor were the English statesmen content with securing the allegiance of their own country to the rightful Pontiff. They exerted the powerful influence which England then possessed throughout the States of Europe, to obtain the adhesion of other potentates to the cause of Urban. There were two sovereigns in particular, with whom England was closely allied, they were the Emperor Wenceslaus, and Peter, king of Arragon. The Emperor's decision in favour of Urban was announced to that Pontiff, together with the intelligence that England and Hungary likewise remained faithful; and Catherine, writing from Rome on the 1st of January 1379, to Stephen Maconi, who was still at Siena, refers to this piece of good news, saying, "Holy Church and Pope Urban VI., by the sweet goodness of God, have received the best news during the last few days, that they have had for a long time. I send with this a letter for the Bachelor (W. Flete), in which you will see what graces God is beginning to pour out on His Spouse, and I trust through His mercy that they will go on multiplying" (Letter 264). This "good news" was the fidelity of England and the other northern nations; and it is noteworthy that Catherine at once communicated the intelligence to F. William Flete, who, as we have seen, had his own share in the business. As to Peter of Arragon, he had declared his intention of remaining neutral until he should have taken counsel with other Christian kings. He particularly consulted his English allies, with what result will appear in the following letter, which we quote (abridged) from Rinaldi:

"*To the august Prince the King of Arragon, and our well-beloved Cousin.*

"COUSIN, beloved beyond that which we can express in writing, —You are aware how two persons are now contending for the Papacy, namely, the one who was first elected and who lives at Rome, named Urban, and another elected afterwards, named Clement, who is living at Avignon; and though you have been

solicited by both parties to declare for one or the other, yet you would not do this, until you were assured which of the two was the true Pontiff. . . . You have begged Us to acquaint you with what We have deliberated concerning this matter, and of what mind We are. . . . Be it known to you, that from many persons worthy of credit, who were present at the election made at Rome of the aforesaid Lord Urban, We have learnt that he was lawfully and canonically elected by the College of Cardinals then in Rome, previous to any popular tumult alleged by the Cardinals as having taken place. Therefore they afterwards enthroned and crowned him, and obeyed him as true, canonical, Sovereign Pontiff, and rendered him Pontifical honours. They also received Holy Communion from his hands, asked and obtained various favours from him, and for some considerable time acknowledged him as true Pope; until on account of certain things which he proposed to do out of just and honourable zeal, the Cardinals themselves went backwards, led astray by the malignant spirit, and rebelled maliciously against him. Having therefore maturely considered these things, and held council with the bishops and clergy of Our realm, and those skilled in the laws recently convoked in Parliament, by their advice and that of the peers and nobles and commons of the realm assembled in Parliament, We have decided that We ought to adhere to the said Lord Urban as true and Canonical Pope, and We hope that you and all other Catholic princes will do the same for justice's sake. And that you may know in what manner the illustrious King of the Romans and Bohemia (Wenceslaus),[1] as also the King of Hungary, conduct

[1] Wenceslaus, King of Bohemia elected Emperor, but not being yet crowned, he as yet only assumed the title of King of the Romans. His daughter, Anne of Bohemia, became the queen of Richard II.: hence the strict alliance between those two sovereigns. Urban VI. confirmed Wenceslaus in the Imperial dignity, to which cause Maimbourg attributes his adherence to that Pontiff; though he might more correctly have reserved the statement, and said that Urban's confirmation was granted in acknowledgment of the fidelity shown by the King of the Romans to the Apostolic See. Letters similar to the above were sent by Richard to the Count of Flanders, another close ally of England.

themselves in this behalf, We transmit to you a number of letters of the said King of the Romans and Bohemia addressed to Us on this subject.

"May the Most High preserve your Majesty in prosperity unto length of days.

"Given under Our private seal, at our palace of Westminster, on the 14th day of September (1378).[1]

"Richard, *by the grace of God,*
"*King of England and France.*"

From the position they had thus taken up, the King, Clergy, and Parliament of England never swerved. In the March of 1379 a process was instituted against the rebellious Cardinals, in form of a Brief addressed by Simon of Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, to the Bishop of London, communicating the copy of a letter received from the Pope, in which the whole history of the Schism is carefully drawn up. By this Brief all the Schismatics and those who support them are excommunicated, and the letters ordered to be read in all churches;[2] and when after the calamitous death of Simon (who was slaughtered in the Tower by the insurgents under Wat Tyler), Courtenay, Bishop of London, was promoted to the Primacy, on receiving the Pall he not only swore fidelity to the Holy See, but formally abjured all connection with Robert of Geneva and his schismatical adherents.

When actual hostilities began between the two parties, the English were no less forward with their aid, and Henry Knighton gives an amusing account of the zeal which the devout ladies of England in particular manifested in making collections for the Holy Father. One lady gave as much as £100, a large sum in those days. Others contributed jewels, necklaces, rings, combs, and a variety of other female ornaments in great abundance, so that, to use the words of the historian, *all the secret treasure of the kingdom, which was in the hands of the women, was risked.* This extraordinary liberality was in no small degree due to the large

[1] Rinaldi, 1378, No. 42, quoting from tom. 18, De Schis., p. 152.
[2] Wilkin's Conc., vol. iii.

indulgences granted by Urban to those who should come to the aid of the See Apostolic, the preaching of the so-called Crusade being committed to the care of the brave, chivalrous, popular, and most able Henry de Spenser, Bishop of Norwich.[1]

But we shall not be tempted to further digressions into the English annals of the period, interesting as they are, and certainly more full of edification at this particular juncture than those of the Continental States. In England, as elsewhere, there were doubtless plenty of abuses both among clergy and laity; but we observe one marked superiority which the Church in this country possessed at this time over other lands. She could boast of many great, wise, and holy prelates; men who stood as bulwarks against both the spread of heresy and the encroachments of the Crown. Looking over the annals of other kingdoms we find as remarkable an absence of great names among the bishops and prelates of the period. The history of St. Catherine does not bring us in contact with a single French or Italian bishop of any eminence in the Church. This quite exceptional poverty in the Episcopal staff of that period seems to afford an explanation of the otherwise incomprehensible enigma, how a scandal so monstrous as that of the Great Schism could ever have come about. The Church was weak precisely in that point wherein should lie her greatest strength; she lacked "those faithful guardians of the Lord's flock" who in other times of grievous trial stood forth as Defenders of the Faith. Had it been otherwise, it would have been impossible that the eyes of the faithful should have been scandalised by the spectacle of a clergy rebelling against their Head, and rebelling on the distinct and unmistakable ground that he desired to reform their abuses.

And this remark suggests another with which we will conclude our imperfect sketch of this dark and sorrowful time. St. Catherine did not only predict the Schism; she likewise foretold a time of renewal and consolation, when the Church, then covered, as it were, with rags, should appear adorned with jewels, and all the faithful should rejoice at seeing themselves governed by good

[1] Knighton's Chronicle, p. 2671.

and holy pastors.[1] Have not we been reserved to witness the fulfilment of this prophecy, and do we not with our own eyes behold the accomplishment of her further prediction of a time *when even unbelievers, attracted by the good odour of Christ, shall return to the true fold, and yield themselves to the true Bishop and Pastor of their souls?*"

"In truth," says Rohrbacher, "we are witnessing the very marvels, the mere prophetic view of which thrilled the heart of St. Catherine of Siena with joy unutterable. We see the faithful in every land, at home and abroad, rejoicing in the government of good and holy bishops. We see God everywhere renewing His elect: on the Apostolic Chair we behold the spirit of St. Gregory and St. Leo; in the Episcopate we see the spirit of St. Athanasius and St. Ambrose; among priests and religious we see reviving the spirit of St. Jerome, St. Benedict, St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Ignatius, and St. Vincent of Paul; we see the Church, beautiful as in the days of her youth, adorned with a diadem of virtues, with the lilies of a countless number of holy virgins, with the palms of a noble army of martyrs of every age, sex, rank, and nation; from those multitudes of the faithful, seculars and ecclesiastics, who confessed the faith in the last century on the scaffolds of France, to those of our brethren and sisters who have confessed and are at this moment confessing it in the prisons and torture-rooms of Tonquin, China, and Corea. Holland, Scotland, England and Germany, countries which for so many years persecuted the children of the Church, are beginning to look towards her with revived tenderness, to grant her bishops liberty of action, and often to second the efforts of her missionaries more effectually than is done in France. The best heads of Protestant England are labouring to justify the Roman Church and the Roman Pontiff from national prejudices; while the savages of America and Oceania are crying to us for priests, to procure whom, the faithful of all lands unite in contributing their prayers and their alms: new Apostolic congregations are being formed, old ones are being revived, and the chance of martyrdom

[1] Leg. Part 2, ch. x.

only offers an additional attraction to those who would emulate the glories of St. Francis Xavier!"[1]

To us in England who have witnessed the marvellous resurrection of the faith in these latter days, these eloquent words, far from seeming excessive, fall short of the actual truth. It is impossible for us to read St. Catherine's prediction, and not give thanks to God that we have lived to behold and take part in that great revival of which she spoke; it is impossible for us not to see all around us the fulfilment of our glorious Mother's words, and not to rejoice in acknowledging that among ourselves the days have truly come "when unbelievers, attracted by the good odour of Christ, have returned by thousands to the true Fold," and submitting with loving joy to the Chair of St. Peter, "have acknowledged their true Head, and yielded themselves to the guidance of the Bishop and pastor of their souls."

NOTE.—The letters quoted in the above chapter as written by Richard II. could scarcely have been his actual composition, he being then no more than twelve years of age. They were, of course, drawn up by those ministers in whose hands the government of the kingdom was vested during his minority; but he steadily adhered to the policy inaugurated by them. It may not be uninteresting to the reader to know that this Prince is supposed to have been himself a brother of the Third Order of St. Dominic; and that so early as the year 1375 he obtained a Bull from Rome whereby the chaplains who accompanied him on his journeys, and with whom he was accustomed to recite the Divine Office, received permission to do so according to the Dominican Rite, and to use the Breviary of the Order. A translation of this Bull will be found in Appendix C.

[1] Rohrbacher, Hist. de l'Eglise, vol. xxi. pp. 26, 27.

CHAPTER V

Family Letters, 1379

IN the preceding chapters we have endeavoured to give so much of the history of the Schism as is needed for the understanding of this latter portion of St. Catherine's public life; and we shall now gladly return to its more private records, and to the correspondence kept up between her and her companions in Rome with their absent friends at Genoa and Siena. The reader, it is hoped, has not forgotten that Stephen Maconi was left at the latter place, detained by business, and as it would seem, also, in compliance with the wishes of his family. He would gladly have accompanied the Saint to Rome, and failing that, desired speedily to have followed her; but she would not allow it. "As to your journey," she says, "it is not necessary for the affairs in question; I do not therefore ask you to come. I should have been very glad if you could have done so, and shall be still more glad when you are able to come; but it must be without giving occasion of complaint to any one. You must not irritate or trouble your parents more than can be helped. Avoid this as much as possible; I am sure that when God sees it best, He will put a stop to all murmuring, and enable you to come in peace. So only come if you can do so without giving offence." (Letter 256.) Barduccio, to whom this letter was dictated, added a concluding paragraph on his own account, to say that he wanted Stephen so badly about some business on which he was engaged, that if his friend did not make haste and come, he should go and fetch him. This was only another way of saying that the little family terribly missed their gay and charming comrade; and he, on his part, felt

Siena equally dull without them. So, as they were mutually deprived of one another's society, they made up for the loss by frequent letter-writing; the absentees in Rome charging Stephen with all sorts of messages and commissions, and he giving vent to his dissatisfaction at being left at home, by characteristic grumbling. They kept him well employed: Catherine writes to him about a horse which she is supposed to have ordered, and bids him see that the mistake is rectified, for she knows nothing whatever about the animal. He is to send to the Countess Bianchina for the copy of the Dialogue that had been lent her, and not returned. "I have expected it daily, but it has never come. If you go, be sure and tell her to send it to me as soon as possible, and see that whoever goes does not forget it." He is also charged with several missions of charity. If Lapa returns to Siena, he is to see after her; and he is to be very kind to Catherine (of the Hospital), who is poor, alone, and friendless. Then there are messages to Master Matthew, who has been ill, and wants them to do some commissions for him in Rome; and to Peter Ventura, who is to join them as soon as he possibly can. And there are generally a number of sealed letters enclosed for him to distribute to their respective owners.

In one of his replies Stephen has to communicate the unpleasant intelligence, that a certain person named Megliorino would not evacuate Catherine's house, in which he seems to have taken up his abode uninvited, in the absence of its rightful owners. However he may have got in, neither Father Thomas nor Stephen Maconi could succeed in getting him out. "I wrote to our Mother to say that he was going out," says Stephen, "and, indeed, he had solemnly promised me to do so, in presence of Ser Christofano, saying that as she was not willing he should remain there, he would leave by next St. Agnes' feast. I spoke to him again to-day, in presence of Sano di Bartholomew, reminding him of his promise, and telling him that, as a man of honour, he was bound to keep his word, &c. And although it seemed to me that he had made up his mind not to go, it ended by my getting Sano to speak to him, and I think he will manage, so that I may

be satisfied. I think Sano wished I had spoken to *him* about it, and I know he wants him to go." There are also two allusions to a singular, and one would say a rather troublesome, commission which Stephen had to discharge for his friends in Rome. They wanted him to procure and send them a *capretto raso.* That *a whole kid,* alive or dead, shaven or unshaven, should have been sent from Siena to Rome for the use of Catherine and her disciples, is difficult of belief; and the probable explanation seems to be, that not the kid itself, but its *skin,*[1] stripped of the hair and otherwise prepared, was sent to the little party; possibly to supply them with shoe-leather. Why they could not procure this necessary article in Rome is a mystery, of which we can suggest no explanation; but that there was a difficulty in the case appears from another of the letters, in which Master Thomas Petra, the Pope's secretary, asks Neri to get some *shoes* made for him in Naples. Catherine and her family lived on alms, and as poor persons, they probably proposed to get their kid-skin from home, and convert it into shoes and sandals with their own fingers. The obliging Stephen at once set to work. "As to the *capretto raso* you asked me for, I inquired of Paul in order to know what, and how much to get, and he says that one will be sufficient for your purpose; so we are sending it to you by that wood-master of ours, a Sienese, and a friend of Paul's, who is son to Master Francesco del Tonghio." The *wood-master;* a curious expression, but one which is not without its interesting explanation, too; for Master Francesco del Tonghio, father to the "wood-master," was none other than the artist who carved the wooden stalls in the choir of the Duomo, and presided over the *tarsia,* or inlaid woodwork, then being executed in that building. One sees that Stephen had plenty to do in quality of general agent for the rest of the "family," and all these affairs kept him busy, and were the trifles out of which he contrived to find matter for scribbling his lengthy and amusing letters. Not less amusing

[1] *Chevreau* in French stands not merely for a kid, but a *kid-skin,* and the expression *Carta di capretto* is used for Vellum in one of Stephen Maconi's letters.

in its way is the contrast between these letters written in charming familiar Tuscan, and a Latin epistle, the only one preserved, from Brother Simon of Cortona, the young Dominican, whom as a novice Catherine had treated somewhat like a pet child. He was evidently studying hard to acquire that peculiar epistolary style which in those days was *de règle* between religious men; and an extreme example of which has been presented in the correspondence between William Flete and John of the Cells. There is a theory current among some persons, that the clergy of the Middle Ages were ignorant of the Scriptures: the biographer of Luther has (I believe) represented that historical personage as startled and overwhelmed, when at an advanced age there for the first time fell into his hands an unknown book called the Bible. But when one reads the compositions—historical, epistolary, or hortatory—in which the religious men of those ages endeavoured to convey their sentiments on the most ordinary subjects by means of a string of Scripture texts ingeniously adapted to the occasion, one is tempted to wish, I will not say that they had been less familiar with the letter of Scripture, but at least that they had been guided by better taste in its adaptation. However, Brother Simon, no doubt, had no choice in the matter; and he addresses Neri a solemn little letter, in which, when he wants to express that he does not forget his good friends, he quotes the Gospel precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself;" and is unable to say that he longs to see them all again without referring to that of the Psalmist, "As the hart desireth the water-brooks, so does my soul," &c., adding, "But woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged," by which he means to say that he cannot get leave of absence to pay them a visit.

Some of the correspondence is more serious, bearing reference to the troubles of the times, and specially of their own city. Owing to circumstances that are nowhere explained, Siena had not yet been relieved from the interdict which she had incurred through her alliance with the Florentines; and considerable embarrassment was thus caused to the consciences of the faithful.

Giacomo Tolomei, Bishop of Narni, having been sent to Siena for the purpose of arranging for the absolution of the city and the final restoration of Talamon, some persons endeavoured to evade the difficulties of their position by enrolling themselves as members of his household, and so sharing the privilege he and his servants of course enjoyed of being able to assist at the Holy Sacrifice. Stephen, among others, had been persuaded to do this; but he did not venture to hear Mass until he had written to consult the Saint. She did not like the proposition at all: there was a want of straightforward adhesion to the plain line of duty in it, which was repugnant to her sense of truth; and she writes at once in reply: "About the Mass, you did quite right not to go. As to your having made yourselves the 'familiars' of Monsignore Giacomo, if I had known of it, you would not have done so; you should have been humble and obedient, and patiently waited the moment of peace. However, if you think now you may go with a safe conscience, do so, but not otherwise. I do not know if his rank gives him such extensive privileges, or if by his 'familiars,' we are justified in including any besides those actually in his service. Can we take the title of 'familiars,' if we are not, and have no intention of becoming so? Does his rank allow of it, and who has assured you that it does?" (Letter 256.)

Meanwhile Catherine was not backward in procuring indulgences and privileges from Urban for her friends in Siena, and exerting herself to hasten the conclusion of this painful business. But this was not all. She was naturally full of solicitude as to what part Siena might take in the question of the Schism. What she could not do in person to confirm their fidelity she tried to effect by her letters, and through the influence of her disciples, whom she charged to keep her accurately informed of the state of public opinion. On the 14th January, 1379, a letter from Christofano to Neri di Landoccio gave assurance that so far as he could ascertain there was not a man in Siena who entertained the least doubt that Urban was the rightful Pope. "If the ambassadors of the Antipope come here," he says, "they will not be listened to; we must pray much for the Spouse of Christ

whom they seek to deprive of her Bridegroom, and in which so much cockle is being sown. But she is founded on a rock which cannot fail, even the Rock that said to Peter, *Rogabo pro te ut non deficiat fides tua, igitur confundantur qui eam persequantur.* The more she is abased the more she is exalted, *Quia dictum fuit sibi: Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram edificabo ecclesiam meam.*" He has a few words on his own affairs; he has been appointed Notary to the Institution for Orphans, and though sorry on some accounts, is glad to stay at Siena. He wants to come to Rome before Easter, if his colleague will let him. Then after the usual salutations which, according to the custom of the time, were somewhat lengthy, he says, "All our brethren salute you. Tell Mamma that *we are rather falling to pieces;* I wish she would give us some sort of a rule, which for her sake we would obey, and meet together at certain times in her name; and beg her to write to her wandering sheep, though we are all well assured she does not forget us in her prayers."

This request for "some sort of a rule," Catherine did not refuse, and we are disposed to think that one of her letters addressed "to Sano di Maco and other seculars, her sons in Christ," was written by way of reply. After some long and very beautiful spiritual instructions on the light of faith, without which they cannot accomplish the will of God, she says, "I desire to see you all serving Him without measure, not in your own way, but His; not choosing times and places, or seeking consolation, or refusing trials, but embracing sufferings for the honour of God. Follow Christ crucified, macerating your bodies by watching, fasting, and prayer. Resign your wills to the sweet will of God, and let your Society be a society of His servants. When you assemble together,[1] do not lose your time in idle words, criticising the

[1] "From these words," says Burlamacchi, "we see that the disciples of the Saint were formed into a sort of Spiritual Society, as is still the custom in many cities of Tuscany, assembling to confer on spiritual things, spending part of festival days in pious conversation, spiritual reading, or the singing of God's praises; and as most of these disciples belonged to the Company of Mary (under the Hospital), she is probably referring to their meetings held in that holy place."

conduct of others, or tearing your neighbour's reputation to pieces with murmurs and rash judgments; for God alone is the Sovereign judge of all. But show that you have assembled in the name of Christ, to confer together on His goodness, on the virtues of the Saints, and your own faults. Be strong, constant, and persevering; it is perseverance alone that will obtain the crown. The memory of the Precious Blood will entirely detach you from all things contrary to the will of God; be faithful to Him and to my miserable self. If I do not write to you, I nevertheless always love you, and occupy myself about your salvation in the presence of God. Have courage then, and love one another. I desire more than ever to see all your names written in the Book of Life." (Letter 247.)

In another letter she particularly warns them on the subject of uncharitable conversation. "On this head," she says, "I do not think you are, as yet, all perfect. Often under colour of zeal or compassion you murmur and judge others. Now this must be displeasing to God, and it is not the teaching you have received; you should mutually love one another and bear each other's faults. No one is faultless; that belongs to God only. If you were His faithful servants, we should see no murmurs, or ridicule, or scandal, or disobedience among you, whether in joke or earnest. I have often noticed this imperfection in you." (Letter 248.) The day after Christofano's letter was received, came one from Stephen, somewhat different in style. He also writes to Neri; and indeed it is remarkable that among all the letters preserved, none, or nearly none, are addressed directly to Catherine.

"DEAREST BROTHER IN JESUS CHRIST,—I have been wonderfully pleased with the contents of the two letters you have written to me since you left Siena, and they comforted me so much that I was not content with reading them once, or even twice. As to what you say of our sweet and venerable Mother, it is no sort of surprise to me; I have no doubt about it, knowing many facts, beyond comparison greater, which I cannot write. Indeed I believe and confess that our sweetest Mamma *is* Mamma; and every day I hope to believe and confess it more earnestly.

"The other great and good news[1] which you send, touching the exaltation of Holy Church and of the true successor of St. Peter, Pope Urban VI., has been a sort of mitigating unguent to the pain I have felt, and am still feeling; and though it is much alleviated, yet I don't think I shall be quite cured till I find myself once more at the feet of my dearest Mother. I hope, in God's goodness, soon to be free. I have done what you desired, narrating and spreading about the news as much as possible, so that good folk who believe Pope Urban to be the true Pope may rejoice, and that the wicked who believe the contrary may be put to confusion. Every one who has heard it up till now has shown the greatest joy. On this point at least you may give a good report to the Holy Father; for I assure you that everybody, universally and with one voice, declare he is true Pope, and that they will hold to his obedience; nor have I heard of any one who holds the contrary view. And in proof of this I will tell you further that, a few days since, it was said that an ambassador of the Antidemon,[2] who was at Fondi, was coming here: for which cause, suspecting he would get no hearing here, many who were zealous for God's honour (from which number I do not wish to exclude myself, however tepidly I may seek it) buzzed the matter about in the Palazzo, and in the ears of the people outside, who might be able to devise some remedy; showing them that this demon was coming here to sow heresy among us, and to contaminate our faith, and suggesting that it would be a good work done to burn him, &c. Moreover, Peter (Ventura) and I went at once to Messer di Narni, offering ourselves as his lordship's humble servants to be the first to lay hands on him. And I promise you we found the people so well disposed, it would have been a real

[1] *i.e.* The fidelity to Urban, of England, Hungary, and the Empire, which Catherine had already communicated to Stephen and William Flete.

[2] Stephen very often calls the Antipope the *Antidemon*, a palpable blunder; for if one who opposes the Pope is an *Antipope*, and one who opposes Christ is an *Antichrist*, an *Antidemon* can mean no other than one opposed to the demon; *i.e.*, a true servant of Christ. He probably meant either an *Antichrist*, or an *Archdemon*; but his pen, like his tongue, often outran his thoughts.

pleasure to you to have seen them; specially those at the Palazzo, who immediately gave orders that he was not to be suffered to enter the gates. The children declared they would stone him, and I verily believe that had he come, one way or another he would not have escaped with his life. I write this to show the good dispositions of our poor little city, and to comfort you for the pain you felt some time back when it was opposed to the obedience of the Church.

"I will say no more except to ask you, my sweet brother, not to forget me, but to pray for me who certainly needs your prayers, that God in His goodness may deliver me from the miserable bondage of the world, and show me in what way I may best serve Him. And there are two signs by which you can show that you do not forget me; one is, that you very often recommend me to our dear and venerable Mother; and be so good as to do that at once, before this letter goes out of your hands, so that you may not forget it. The other is, that you write to me very, very often, a thing I entreat as earnestly as I can, specially about what you promised, and also when you have any good news to tell me about the Church. I am sure you would do so if you knew what a great charity it is.

"Remember me to all our poor family, each one in order, bearing in mind that the head and every member is fixed in the very centre of my heart. Tell Gabriel (Piccolomini), who shows very little charity to his brethren, that I will do as he asks, and that I have not been once to sit by his fireside this year, except when I read them his letter, which was listened to very gladly. God keep us all in His love, and grant that we may soon meet again. Your useless and unworthy brother Stephen, poor in all virtue. Jan. 15, 1378 (79)."

The "Peter" mentioned in this letter, who seems at this time to have been Stephen's constant companion, was Peter Ventura, the same whose eye had been cured by Catherine at Belcaro, and who, when he and his horse had ridden by mistake into the lake, got out again after invoking her. His character was very sympathetic with Stephen's, and he often came in for a share in the

scoldings which Catherine bestowed on his friend. She not unfrequently wrote one letter addressed to both, and seems to have thought her exhortations against carelessness and tepidity as applicable to one as to the other.

Stephen's friends in Rome took rather a serious view of the letter we have just quoted, and not only thought it a little giddy, but considered that in his tales about the desire of the Sienese to stone or burn the envoy of the Antipope, he was, to use a common phrase, "drawing the long bow." Neri wrote and told him so plainly, and we shall see presently in what way he justified himself. Meanwhile a difficult negotiation was placed in Catherine's hands. Pope Urban was in want of substantial aid to defend himself against the forces of the Antipope, which were beginning to establish themselves at Marino. He therefore engaged Catherine to appeal, in his name, to her countrymen, and she obeyed. But though the Magistrates showed every wish to hold firmly to their allegiance, yet when there was question of proving their loyalty by contributing supplies of men and money, difficulties not unnaturally arose. Catherine, therefore, in obedience to the Pope's wishes, addressed a letter to the Defenders of the Republic (Letter 203), in which she urged, among other arguments, the motive of gratitude to Pope Urban who had absolved their city, and prevented Talamon from remaining in the hands of the Pisans; yet now, she complains, when it had come to giving proof of their gratitude, they treated him like a child, putting him off with fair words, and giving him no substantial aid. The Sienese, who had already paid down 8000 gold florins for the restoration of Talamon, perhaps felt the further demand on their exchequer somewhat a hardship; and as they were slow in their response, the Saint thought it well to appeal to the devotion of that association, whose influence in Siena was powerful with persons of all ranks and whose words and example were sure to carry respect. This was the Company of the Blessed Virgin, which has already been spoken of as holding its assemblies in the subterranean vaults of the hospital of La Scala, and most, if not all, of whose members were her fervent disciples.

So she writes to them that it is time to see if they are indeed branches of the true Vine. If so, in this time of calamity they will come to the aid of the Master of the Vineyard both spiritually and temporally; spiritually by their prayers, temporally by doing what they can to induce the Magistrates of the republic to send him supplies. "We certainly ought to do this," she continues; "have we so little love for the Faith as not to be ready to make some sacrifice for it? Can we forget the great benefits we have received from God and his Holiness? I beg of you, therefore, put your hand to the work and that without delay." (Letter 144.) Then she writes to Stephen Maconi to tell him what she has done, and charges him to support her appeal by all means in his power. "I send you a letter I have written to the Lords Defenders, and another to the Company of Mary. Read them, and profit by them; then have them delivered, and speak to each one as occasion serves, according to the tenor of these letters, enjoining everybody, in God's name and mine also, to labour with all their power in concert with the Magistrates, to do what can be done for the help of the Church and of the Holy Father. For my part, I only regret that so much trouble is necessary when there is question of God's honour and the spiritual and temporal interests of our city. Try not to be tepid, but stir up the brethren and chiefs of the Company that they may do their utmost. If you and your brethren were what you ought to be, you would kindle all Italy; the thing is not so difficult." (Letter 261.)

To this appeal Stephen replied, and his letter, addressed to Neri, shows that he somewhat shared the sentiments of the Magistrates; at any rate, he frankly exposed their difficulties. At the same time, he took occasion to defend himself from the charge of levity and exaggeration which his grave friend had brought against him on occasion of his January letter.

"DEAREST BROTHER IN JESUS CHRIST,—On the 21st of June I received your letter written on Ascension Day (May 19th), in which you give me good news[1] as to the affairs of the successor

[1] This fresh "good news," written on May 19th, was no doubt an account of the victory gained over the forces of the Antipope on the 29th of April.

of St. Peter, and the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and the confusion of that Antidemon, all which gave me great and singular joy. Although I had already some weeks back heard something of what you wrote, yet not so particularly; so it caused me a new pleasure. . . . You say, that to please no one, ought I to tell lies, and I suppose you think what I wrote in my last letter was all lies. But to this I reply that I wrote nothing but the truth as to what *had* happened; as to what was going to happen in the future, granting it was not all true, yet I don't consider I told any lie, for I did not say anything contrary to what was in my mind,[1] and I said it at no human being's suggestion. Possibly the great wish I had that it might be as I said, made me believe more than was true. But I seemed to see the villain coming and sowing his cockle among the good seed in the field of the Lord. And I say again, that as far as I know or have heard, there are certainly not more than nine or ten at the most who do not hold with Pope Urban, and few as they are, they are all regarded as thieves. In spiritual matters particularly all will obey the Pope as their true Pastor, but as to temporals they allege their poverty and the misery in which we are. Just think, every month the soldiers here require six thousand gold florins; and only the day before yesterday, the Company[2] demanded fifteen thousand; and even so, we could not prevent their scouring the Maremma and surrounding country. I don't say this by way of excuse. I have spoken to them on the subject many times; and both in the Signoria and elsewhere, I do not yield them an inch, and pretend not to believe them, saying that for God's honour and for the maintenance of the faith we ought willingly to pay something; and if we are too poor, we should pledge the goods of the

[1] After the lapse of six months, such a madcap as Stephen may be pardoned if he had no very clear remembrance of what he had written expressive of the delight he would have felt in burning the envoy of Clement, which seems to have been the point disapproved of by Neri.

[2] We learn from the Chronicle of Neri di Donato, that to protect themselves from the ravages of the Free Lances, the cities of Lucca, Siena, Pisa, Perugia, and Florence came to an agreement with them, paying them a regular sum in money.

Commune; and that if we cannot send many men, we should at least send a few,[1] and that the Holy Father will accept the little that is possible for us. For, believe me, dear brother, it grieves me to my heart that the Holy Father should not have what he desires from this city, and I have said so much about it, that I have often been told I say more than becomes me. But for that I care but little." Then follows the passage already quoted in which he asks for a copy of the letter written to the king of England, and complains that F. Thomas, who had gone to Rome, had given him no news of anybody, except what he knew before. He continues, "If I had time, I would give you a good laugh; not the others only, but even Master Matthew was ready to split with laughter." Then come messages to "Our sweetest Mother, whom he would die for rather than displease," to Monna Lisa, and Alexia, and Cecca, and the other Sisters, and to Master John III., and Fra Santi, and F. Bartholomew, "and a great deal very specially to Master Thomas Petra, and to all the family, whom though I am not worthy to be with them in the body, yet in heart I am ever with them. I was just finishing this letter in our room at the Misericordia, when who should come in but Master Matthew himself, and finding I was writing to you, he desires me to send this message to our Mother,—that he has written so many letters he does not think he can write any more, but he begs her, and you, and everybody to remember him in such a way as that some effects may follow. We are certainly much indebted to him, and I include myself, for he has made me, I may say, one of his family, and has given me a room here, which I use day and night. Farewell. If you cannot write yourself, get Barduccio or Cecca to do so; I am sure they will do it willingly."

Meanwhile Neri had been sent to Naples, and F. Bartholomew Dominic came to Rome. We have one of his letters to Neri, which is interesting as setting before us, in a commonplace, matter-of-fact way, some of the circumstances of St. Catherine's

[1] Eventually a body of troops was sent by Siena to the aid of Urban, under the command of Sozzo Bandinelli.

daily life in Rome: her interviews with Urban, the weighty business in which she was as constantly engaged as if she had been a Secretary of State, the projected expedition to Naples talked over and finally given up, and how she and her family were supported on alms. "We have received two of your letters," writes Bartholomew, "one written to our Mother, the other to me. You tell me I am to get those two letters sealed; I will do so as soon as I can; but when I spoke of it to Master Thomas (Petra) a few days after you left, he said that his Holiness would not seal any of them unless he first had assurance of the good life of the persons concerned. He was then ill, but is better again now, though somewhat weak. To-day, Master John wishing to get his and Peter's sealed, Master Thomas spoke to his Holiness, our Mother and Master John being present: and his Holiness replied that they must draw up the petition afresh, and then he would sign it. So Master John does not know what to do, and Master Thomas is so weary of it all that he will have nothing more to do with it. None the less I will do what I can. Master Thomas says you may have the shoes made by whoever you please, and sent to him. To-day we received six gold florins from the Countess Joanna (d'Aquino) and from Madonna Catilla and her companions at Naples. It is all we have had. Our mother has several times thought she was coming; but it does not seem to be the will of God, and the Pope does not consent, though at first he said that he wished it. I fancy now we must think no more about it.

"At Rome, Sept. 1st, (1379). Thy brother Bartholomew Dominic."

Are we not right in calling these "family letters"? They bring before us Catherine and her companions in the aspect of ordinary mortals, not however to the exclusion of the fact that the extra-ordinary mingled with the ordinary, as Stephen's casual remark[1] lets us see. The messages about horses, kid-skins, shoes, and refractory tenants, Stephen's careless rattle, and Neri's grave rebuke; good Master Matthew looking into the room at the

[1] See p. 218.

Misericordia, and compelled to split with laughter at some joke related by his irresistible guest; the letter from Rome read at Gabriel's fireside, and Christofano's solemn confession that in the absence of their spiritual Mother her disciples were getting rather careless and relaxed,—does it not bring before us each individual of this beloved "family," and make them live again, as we hear them tell their own story in their own natural unaffected words? Concerning one of the party, however, we have a good deal more to say. In spite of his light-hearted exterior, and a certain carelessness which seems to have been the fault which Catherine was always trying to correct in her "tepid" and "negligent" son, Stephen Maconi was not entirely happy. As in most men of his temperament the outward seeming was not altogether a trustworthy index of the inward self. Even in the correspondence which has been quoted, the reader may have observed the passing hint he drops to Neri, that he is tired of the world, and longs to know what God demanded of him. Catherine had long ago penetrated to the most secret recesses of his heart, and understood him far better than he understood himself. In the very earliest letter from her to Stephen which has been preserved, she says, "Follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I feel a difficulty in not saying to you one *word of Christ;* but I hope to be able to say it some day in the right time and place; and then you will hasten to fill the vessel of your heart with the Precious Blood." This "word of Christ" was doubtless His word to the young man in the Gospel, "Go, sell all that thou hast, and follow Me." Catherine saw where God was leading this soul; but in her prudence she kept back the word till the right moment should come: when that was will appear in the sequel. In the meantime she watched him with a mother's tenderness, and sought to train him for something better than any career the world could offer. Sometimes she writes to him about the city of his soul, and reminds him that one day the Master will call on him to surrender it to Him, adorned with true and solid virtues. Once he fell into the hands of some roving Free Lances and escaped almost miraculously, and Catherine takes occasion to examine

whether in his moment of danger he had not experienced a strange interior peace. "This was but the Aurora," she adds, "the full light of the sun has not yet risen upon you, when you will be free from all your enemies. Nevertheless, take courage, from this hour of dawn, for the sun will soon arise, and then you will hear the sweet word, 'Let the dead bury their dead.' But on that subject I will say no more at present." Another time she speaks more urgently. "You must cut your bonds and not fasten them; he who does not know how to cut a knot will always remain bound; if he cannot fly, he will always be a prisoner. O negligent son, respond to God's call: it is a shame to see you always keeping God waiting at the door of your heart and never opening it to Him. I say again, you must cut the ties that keep you outside of the will of God, and stop you in the path of perfection. Fly the world, then, go forth from your father's house, retire into the open Side of Jesus crucified. If you will act decidedly, suffering will be your glory; but otherwise you will always be ill at ease, and afraid of your own shadow." These and other similar words show us that Catherine perfectly understood what was working in the heart of her favourite disciple. He was torn to pieces by two contrary emotions: a secret disgust of a worldly life, and a longing after perfection, on the one hand; and on the other, that horror which flesh and blood must inevitably feel at the thought of renunciation. Who, by nature, could have seemed more suited to the world, and more likely to become its spoilt child than the brilliant and volatile Stephen who was everybody's favourite, whom, separated from us by five centuries, we cannot help loving as if we had known him face to face; and to whose feet the world was ready to flow at his first word of invitation? The interior conflict was severe; and in that unsettled mood which betrays itself in variations of temper and changes of purpose, Stephen was just then an enigma to his best friends. Even at a distance from him Catherine discerned what was going on: and now, far from forbidding him to leave Siena, she urged him to come to her, and to "come quickly." "I received a letter from you yesterday," she writes, "which I will answer

in a few words. As to the indulgences I promised to get for you, do not expect them, or anything else from me until you come yourself. I do not say that I will refuse to help you in your spiritual needs: God knows I never desired to do so more ardently than now; never have I more earnestly offered you to God, for I never knew you need it more. You say that your present state displeases you: when it *really* displeases you, you will quit it. Then you will show that you know your state, which up to the present time you have been ignorant of. I trust in God that as the veil is beginning to fall from your eyes it will soon be taken away altogether; then you will see your real state, and it will be soon, too, provided you do not resist, and that my sins do not prove an obstacle." She seems to have been still engaged on this letter (in the middle of which occur some broken and imperfect phrases which indicate an interruption) when another was placed in her hands from the Abbot of Mount Oliveto, near Siena, telling her that Stephen and several of his companions were about to join his Community. And this without a word to her, her counsel not asked, their confidence not given! The report seemed confirmed by all that had appeared so unaccountable in Stephen's late conduct. And yet, after all, it was merely a report founded on words which Stephen had almost unconsciously dropped in conversation, and which had led the Abbot to draw a somewhat hasty conclusion. Startled with the unexpected intelligence, however, Catherine finished her letter to Stephen, and wrote as follows: "I have just received a letter from the Abbot, who talks to me of the plants he has planted in *his* garden and *mine*. He says that he hopes to plant some others, among whom he reckons on *you*,—you and your companions, and says that you have already engaged yourselves! Of course it is a great happiness to me to see you coming out of your state of imperfection and embracing a perfect state; but I confess I am greatly surprised that you should have engaged yourself without letting us know a word about it here. There is something in all this I do not understand: but I pray the Divine Goodness to do whatever may be best for His honour and your salvation.

"You know I have never wished or desired anything else since I first knew you, than that you should be delivered from the corruptions of the world. I have the same wish still, and I hope, please God, to keep it to the end. If you think the Holy Spirit calls you to this state, you have done well not to resist, and I shall be content. When He calls, we must answer. I should have many things to say, but I cannot and will not say them now." (Letter 263.)

And after all the Abbot had made a mistake, and interpreted Stephen's intentions by his own hopes. And he had been a little imprudent and a little premature in communicating his hopes to Catherine, for in reality they had no foundation in fact. So it was all a misunderstanding from beginning to end, such as often takes place in this world of mistakes and imperfections. Yet it inflicted a wound on Catherine's heart, which she had enough of human sensibility to feel acutely; and at that moment with how many wounds was her sensitive nature being pierced! Raymund was at Genoa, Neri at Naples, Stephen at Siena: and now it almost seemed as if he, the child of her predilection, were withdrawing his confidence from her, and deciding his vocation without so much as a reference to the Mother who loved him so tenderly. She did not complain; she rejoiced that he should be set free from the shackles of the world; but the thorn pricked sharp. Nor in saying this are we (as we may hope) representing our holy Mother in too natural a light. They surely do real injustice to the Saints who represent them as strangers to human emotions, whereas we judge that the Saint of saints Himself suffered beyond our utmost capacity of comprehension, precisely because, above all men, He possessed most of that keen sensibility which gives the power of suffering. Catherine then suffered in her woman's heart, and in the decrees of Divine Providence she was intended thus to suffer. In these last months of her mortal life she was to undergo her Passion, and to endure, not merely the extremity of bodily pain and the assault of evil spirits, but, after the pattern of her Divine Spouse, the loss of all human consolation. No letters are preserved which show in what way

Stephen explained this misunderstanding, nor are we able to conjecture why he did not go at once to Rome whither the Saint had so earnestly summoned him. His biographer gives us to understand that he was really detained by important affairs, and that "he was ready to move heaven and earth" to get them finished, that so he might hasten to his beloved Mother, the accounts of whose state of health were beginning to alarm him. But for the present we must leave Stephen and his budding vocation, and see a little what sort of intercourse had been kept up during the same period between Catherine at Rome and Raymund of Capua at Genoa.

It is not every heart that is able to share its love with many friends, and yet to love them all with any degree of intensity. The common verdict of mankind is in favour of the theory that affection, to be worth anything, must be limited to few, if not to one; and that what it gains by diffusion, it loses in force. Those, however, who hold that the perfection of love on earth must be found in its resemblance to the charity which reigns in heaven, will not readily yield the point that in the heart of man, as in the house of God, there are "many mansions;" and that if once such a heart be purified from selfishness, there is absolutely no limit to its power of loving. Such a heart was St. Catherine's; and she whom we have seen writing so eloquently on the variety which makes up the beauty of God's works, presented an example of that same beauty in the variety of her human affections. Thomas, Bartholomew, Raymund, and Stephen; Lisa, Alexia, and Cecca,—she loved them all, and each with their own individual love. Her letters show that they each had their own separate place in her heart, and she did not write to one as to another. To Raymund she reserved the most intimate outpourings of her confidence; he was the depositary of her secret intercourse with God. Their mutual friendship had only strengthened with time, though the wonderful simplicity of Catherine's character led her sometimes to speak to him with a frankness quite free from human respect. We have seen one specimen of this in her letter to him after his return to Genoa;

he himself has given us other instances not a little amusing. "At the time that I knew her," he says, "I am certain that if she had had an opportunity of speaking on Divine things with persons who understood her, she would have gone on for a hundred days and nights without eating or drinking, and never have been tired, but rather refreshed thereby. I may say this, albeit to my own confusion, that frequently when she spoke to me of God, and His profound mysteries, for a long time together, I, who was far from that fervour of spirit which she possessed, would grow tired if the discourse were much prolonged; and overcome with the heaviness of the flesh, I sometimes fell asleep. At such times she, quite absorbed in God, would go on talking for some time without perceiving it, but when at length she discovered that I was sleeping, she would awake me by exclaiming in a loud voice: 'Alas, Father! why for the sake of a little sleep do you lose the profit of your soul? Am I speaking to a wall, or to you?' She often told us the thoughts of our hearts as clearly as we knew them ourselves, and frequently reproved me for some that had passed through my mind. And if I sought to excuse myself with a falsehood, 'O Father!' she would say, 'how can you say so? Will you deny that which I see more clearly than you see it yourself?' And then she would both tell me precisely what I had been thinking, and, moreover, give me a salutary lesson on the same." But this simplicity of their mutual relations diminished neither his regard nor her respect. He was at once her father and her son; her "dear Father, and negligent son," as she sometimes called him (Letter 92); and the absolute obedience which she rendered him in the one capacity did not prevent her labouring for his perfection in the other. In fact, her obedience to him as her spiritual director was absolute, and he sometimes thought good to put it to the test. One day after they had been conversing together for some time, Catherine rose to go on some charitable errand. He abruptly told her to sit down and remain where she was. She obeyed without the smallest gesture of surprise or hesitation, and was rewarded, says Caffarini, by a flood of ineffable consolation which made her eyes become, as it were,

two fountains of sweet tears.[1] But she was his mother also, and was always trying to increase his fervour and his spirit of self-sacrifice. His chief fault seems to have been a certain repugnance to suffer, and the sum of all her exhortations tended to lead him to greater generosity. "I want to see you possessed with perfect zeal," she writes; "zeal makes us ready to sacrifice our own ease and comfort; no matter whence derived, we should renounce them for the sake of our neighbour. A servant of God once said to Him: 'Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?' and He replied, '*Honour Me and serve thy neighbour:* offer worship to Me, and sufferings for thy neighbour.' Let us then learn to suffer, my dear Father. God has called and chosen you: you thought it was moonlight when you were suffering, but believe me, in suffering you will find your true sunshine. Charity will only triumph in heaven: when she enters there she will bear the fruit of patience, for *patience is the very pith and marrow of charity*. . . Oh, I conjure you, for the love of Jesus, be detached from all creatures, and from me, the most of all. Clothe yourself with the love of God, and love creatures only for God's sake. Love them much, but have little to do with them, unless it be to labour for their souls. I desire to do this, if God gives me the grace. I would fain strip off the garments I have worn till now, and clothe myself anew in the Blood. That blood is, and shall be, the happiness of my soul; I deceived myself when I sought it in creatures. In all my labours I desire to have that Blood with me; in it to find all creatures, in it to quench my thirst for their love, and so to find peace in war, and sweetness in bitterness. And were I deprived of all creatures, and even of my father's tenderness, I should still find the Creator, the Eternal and Sovereign Father." (Letter 93.) When she received the news of his second appointment as Prior of the Minerva, she wrote exhorting him to govern his flock like a good Pastor, and not to be afraid of fatigues. "Accept them with joy, rather, and go to meet them, saying, 'Welcome!' Say moreover, 'What a grace this is which God gives me, by letting me suffer something for the glory of His name!'"

[1] Sup., Part 1, Trat. 2, § 21.

Making due allowances for the immense fervour of Catherine's own soul, compared to which the infirmities of one cast in less heroic mould would naturally appear like pusillanimity, we may gather that in Raymund's character there was a certain deficiency of fire. It betrays itself in the Legend, which bears the stamp of being written by one, admirable rather for his humility and his scrupulous regard for truth, than for strength or ardour. When, therefore, circumstances placed him in the front of the battle, he did his duty on a motive of principle, but there can be no shadow of doubt that according to nature he would have greatly preferred his quiet cell at the Minerva, or even at Montepulciano, to the dignity of Papal Envoy to the King of France. Catherine, who knew him thoroughly, and his disposition to despond, kept ever sounding in his ears her trumpet-notes of encouragement. "I must not have you turn your head aside from any trouble or persecution; I want to see you glory in adversity, for it is only in trial we can show our constancy: we have no other means of giving glory to God. Dear Father, it is now the time for us utterly to forget ourselves; do not let me see you timid. Think of the necessities of the Church—alone, and, as it were, abandoned; and fight generously until death."

But it is in the letters that she addressed to him on the occasion of the failure of his embassy to France, that we best understand their mutual relations. When the news came of his return to Genoa, it moved her, as we have seen, to expressions which naturally disconcerted him to whom they were addressed. In his deep humility he was the first to admit that he could not rise to her level of enthusiasm; and he wrote a reply in which he seemed to doubt his fitness for the burden laid on him, and in his dejection expressed a fear lest he had lost something of Catherine's esteem. Between two hearts united in God by a friendship such as that which existed between Raymund and Catherine, however, no real misunderstanding could arise; and the humility and tenderness of her reply quickly healed the wound which had been caused by her former words. Her reproaches now are not for him, but for herself. "Without the light of Faith," she says, "no work or

desire of ours will attain the end we wish, but everything we do remains imperfect. And the reason is, as it seems to me, that love is the measure of faith, and faith of love. He who really loves is always faithful to that which he loves, even until death. This makes me see that I do not truly love God, and creatures for God. If I did, I should be faithful to Him, and ready to die a thousand deaths every day for His sake. I should have confidence that God would be my defence as He was that of the glorious martyrs. But because I do not love Him, I do not really trust Him; my love is tepid, and this is what hinders all the works He entrusts to me, and prevents their success. Alas! dear Lord, shall I be ever thus miserable at all times and in all places? Shall I always thus hinder the designs of Thy Providence by my infidelity? Yes, most certainly I shall; unless, by Thy mercy, Thou destroy me, and make me anew. Well then, destroy me; break the hardness of my heart, that I may no longer be an obstacle to Thy work. And you, dear Father, pray, I conjure you, that both you and I may become strong in the Blood of the Lamb, and may effect something through His grace, instead of spoiling and ruining all. It is with the same faith that we love the creature; for as charity to our neighbour proceeds from the love of God, so there is a faith which proceeds from the love we bear to creatures. There is a general faith, and there is one more special between those who love each other more intimately, just as besides our general love for all, there is a special love which we bear to some. And this love proves our faith, so that it is impossible for one to believe or understand that the other does not seek his good. He who really loves has this faith, and nothing will change or diminish it, neither the words of men, the deceits of the devil, or change of place; otherwise he shows his love to be imperfect.

"It seems to me, from your letter, that you have suffered many interior conflicts from your sensitive nature; you thought that your burden was beyond your strength, and that I judged you according to my own measure. You thought, too, that my affection for you was diminished, but you were deceived; you

did but prove that *your* charity was diminished, and mine increased: for indeed I love you as I love myself, and I trust that God's goodness will supply what is wanting on your part. But it was not so, for you seemed ready to cast your burden to the ground, and were inclined to fall into weakness and distrust. I saw it clearly enough; and I trust I may have been the only one who perceived it. So you see my love for you augmented instead of diminished. How could you suppose that I desired anything but the life of your soul? Where is the faith which you used to have, and ought always to have? And where that confidence which you did possess, that all events, both great and small, are in the hands of God? If you had been faithful, you would not have been so vacillating and timorous.

"But I know that it is my sins that caused it all. And I know that if there was a moment's weakness, yet you always have a good and holy desire to accomplish the will of God and of His Vicar. I did not wish that you should have been taken, but only that you should have gone on by the route that was pointed out. I, too, have been occupied day and night with affairs that have had no success, owing to the want of zeal of those to whom they were entrusted, but chiefly owing to my sins which prevent everything good. In the kingdom of Naples this last disaster has been worse than the first. I shall have much to say to you about all this, unless before you return, God, in His mercy, should call me out of this world. I certainly do wish you had continued your journey, but I do not trouble about it; for I know all these things happen by the secret purpose of God. My conscience is at peace, for I have done what in me lay to communicate with the King of France. As to the embassy to the King of Hungary, the Holy Father greatly liked the idea, and had decided to send you and your companions. I do not know what changed him, but now he wishes you to remain where you are and do what good you can there. So have no anxiety about it.

"Abandon yourself therefore, and renounce your own sense and all desire of consolation. In Jesus crucified all things are possible to us, and God never lays a burden on us beyond our strength.

We ought to rejoice when we receive a heavy burden, for it is then that God bestows on us the gift of fortitude. It is by the love of suffering that we get to lose the feeling of suffering. Let us then give ourselves up to the false tongues and evil treatment of the wicked, as those did who, dead to themselves, laboured in this sweet Garden (Rome) on which they poured forth their blood, after first watering it with their sweat and their tears. How unhappy we are; for we have not shed our tears, or been counted worthy to pour forth our blood!

"You ask me to pray that God will give you the courage of St. Vincent and St. Lawrence, of St. Paul and the beloved Apostle, and then you say you will do great things: truly without such courage you will do nothing, little or great, and then you will not be my joy. It was because I knew this that I felt my solicitude for you increase in God's presence, and had you been near me I should have given you something more than words. But if you are faithful, you will do great things for God, and bring the affairs entrusted to you to a happy issue: it will not be your fault if they do not succeed. Believe me, I love your soul more than you can comprehend, and therefore I desire to see you perfect, and I would force you to be so if I could. I am always reproaching you in order to make you enter more into yourself; and I try, and shall always try, to make you take up the burden of the perfect, and to obtain from God that you may reach the end of perfection, and shed your blood for the Holy Church, whether sensuality like it or not. You must bear patiently with my faults and with my words; and when you are shown your faults, rejoice in the goodness of God, Who has given you some one to occupy herself about you, and to watch over you in His presence. You say that Antichrist and his members are seeking to get possession of you with all diligence; but surely you cannot doubt that God is strong enough to prevent them from accomplishing their design. You ought to feel yourself unworthy of so great a happiness, and therefore to have no fear at all about it. God and our Sweet Lady will be ever with you. I feel like a vile slave on this ground on which has flowed the blood of martyrs: you left me here, and

you have been with God, but I shall never cease to labour for you. Do not give me reason to blush for you. You are a man when you promise me to suffer for God; do not be a woman when the time comes for you to keep your promises. Take care lest the same thing happen to you that happened to the Abbot of St. Anthimo; he left Siena and came to Rome, thinking to be safe here and to escape being put in prison, but he was put in prison at once, and has suffered as you know. That is the way in which cowardly people are caught. So be courageous and defy death. Pardon me if I have said anything contrary to the respect I owe you; my love must be my excuse." (Letter 101.)

We have said this is the letter of a friend to a friend. Some one has remarked that it is a pity written letters cannot smile; for on that account what is written in jest is too often read in earnest. This letter of St. Catherine's needs to be read with the memory in our mind of that smile which doubtless passed over her lips as she penned some of its passages; its reproaches are more playful than serious, and do but testify to the confidence that existed between these two holy souls.

Here, then, we close these extracts from the more familiar portions of St. Catherine's correspondence. What remains will furnish us with materials for setting before the reader the narrative of her last victory.

CHAPTER VI

Catherine's Last Victory

JAN. AND FEB. 1380

THE joy which had been caused in Rome by the victory of Marino, and the surrender of the Castle of St. Angelo, was of short duration. That double victory was indeed felt as so important a success, that it was announced by the Pope to all the sovereigns of Europe; but it was soon followed by disaffection on the part of the Romans themselves. "The ancient serpent," says Raymund, "finding it impossible to succeed by one means, tried another yet more dangerous. What he could not bring about by strangers and schismatics, he sought to effect by the hands of those who had hitherto remained faithful to the Holy See. He sowed divisions between the people of Rome and the Sovereign Pontiff; and things came to such a point, that at last the people openly threatened to put him to death." We have no precise information as to the cause of these disputes. No doubt the Antipope had his emissaries in Rome as elsewhere, and Catherine, who had long entertained fears that Urban's life was not secure in the city, had more than once warned him of his danger. "I beg of you to take all possible care to have your person well guarded," she writes, "for I know that the wicked do not sleep, and that they are seeking to lay snares against your life." (Letter 18.) In another letter,[1] she refers to some of the difficulties which surrounded his

[1] Letter 22. This is the last letter addressed by Catherine to Urban *which has been preserved;* but it is doubtful whether it was really the last which she ever wrote to him; and whether therefore it is identical with that which we shall find alluded to further on as written on the Monday after Sexagesima.

government, and offers her sagacious counsel. Francesco da Vico, Prefect of Rome, had usurped the lordship of Viterbo, and had given an insolent reply to certain ambassadors whom the Pope had sent to remonstrate with him. Francesco was an old offender, and even in the time of Gregory XI. had often been in arms against the Church, on which account he had incurred excommunication. When Gregory returned to Italy from Avignon he tried to win over this turbulent subject, and admitted him to favour. Urban treated him with more severity, and took measures for driving him out of Viterbo, and regaining possession of that city which was important for the security of Rome. Although in so doing he was amply justified, for the authority which Francesco had seized was utterly unlawful, yet it was a critical moment to choose for pushing his quarrel with so powerful an adversary; and Catherine, who understood the imprudence of such a line of conduct, advised the Pope at once to assemble a Council-general, calling together the chiefs of the city quarters, and other notables, that he might consult with them in this emergency. "I have learnt," she says, "the fierce and insolent reply which the Prefect has given to the Roman ambassadors. The best thing would be to call a Council-general, and for them to send you the chiefs of the quarters (*i Caporioni*) and some notables. I beg of you, most Holy Father, continue as before to see them often, and to keep on good terms with them. And I would suggest that when they come to tell you what the Council has decided, you should receive them with all possible condescension, explaining to them whatever may seem necessary to your Holiness. Pardon me if I say too much, but I think you ought to know the character of your Roman children, whom it is easier to lead by kindness than by harsh words. And you know that what is most necessary for you and for the Church just now, is to keep the people loyal and submissive to your Holiness. I would also most humbly suggest the prudence of your not promising more than you can perform, as much confusion ensues thereby. You will let me say thus much: your goodness and humility will not reject these counsels, though they come from the mouth of so miserable a woman; for the

humble soul considers not who it is that speaks, but only what God's honour requires. Have courage! and as to the insolent reply which that rebel has dared to send your Holiness, fear nothing; God will provide for that as for all else, for He is the Master and Protector of the Ship of Holy Church and of your Holiness." She then refers to some affairs in connection with an embassy from Siena, the explanation of which has not been preserved, and concludes by again urging his Holiness "to condescend to human infirmity, otherwise the evil will only increase. Remember the ruin that ensued throughout Italy, owing to the bad governors not having been changed, who were bringing destruction on the Church of God." (Letter 22.)

No one can read this letter without gaining fresh insight into the character of St. Catherine. If any one has hitherto been disposed to regard her as a mere zealot, who blindly embraced the cause of the Roman Pontiff against that of the Antipope, thinking only of his claims and ignoring the grievances of those who opposed him, this letter is the reply. There is in it a plea for something very like popular government. If he is in difficulties, let him call a Council-general (*Consiglio Generale*) of the chief citizens and listen to their advice; a sound policy, full of good sense, as prudently conceived as it is humbly expressed. We are not informed whether it was adopted by Urban; and it is quite possible that, even if adopted, he did not carry it out in the spirit she would have advised; for the very next fact which comes to our knowledge is the dispute which broke out between the Pope and the Roman people.

Catherine had done her part as the Pope's councillor; if prudence and firmness could have averted the impending calamity, her words had pointed out the right way. Nothing was now left for her to do, save to offer her prayers and her sufferings, nay, to give her very life as a victim for the Church and its earthly Head. This was the sublime office reserved for the last days of her mortal life; she had often longed and prayed for martyrdom, and in a certain sense her prayer was to be granted.

When Catherine heard of the revolt of the Roman citizens,

and their threats against the life of the Pontiff, she was profoundly afflicted; and having recourse to prayer, besought of God not to permit the accomplishment of so terrible a crime. "In a letter to me written at that time," says Raymund, "she told me that she had seen in spirit the city of Rome filled with demons who excited the people to parricide; they poured forth the most horrible threats against the Saint, saying, 'Accursed wretch! thou seekest to hinder us, but we will cause thee to die a terrible death!' She answered them nothing, but only prayed with greater fervour, entreating God, for the honour of His Name, and the salvation of His Church tossed about by such great tempests, to defeat the plots of the enemy, to save the Sovereign Pontiff, and not to suffer the people to commit so abominable a crime. Our Lord replied, 'Leave this people alone who daily blaspheme My Name, and when they have committed this crime, I will destroy them in My wrath, for My justice will no longer endure their iniquities.' But she cried with greater fervour, saying, 'O most merciful Lord! Thou knowest how Thy Spouse, redeemed with Thy Blood, is outraged throughout the entire world; and how few defenders she has, and how her enemies seek her humiliation and the death of Thy Vicar. If this calamity should happen, not the Romans only, but all the faithful will suffer much. Be appeased then, O Lord, and despise not Thy people for whom Thou hast paid so precious a ransom.'

"This struggle with her Divine Spouse lasted many days and nights, and her feeble body had much to suffer. God opposed His justice to her prayers, and the evil spirits continued their clamours against her. The struggle was so great that, to use her own expression, if God had not encircled her members she would have been annihilated by it. But in this obstinate combat, wherein her bodily strength was utterly wasted by protracted suffering, Catherine at last triumphed and obtained her petition. When God alleged His justice, she replied, 'O Lord, if Thy justice must needs be satisfied, inflict on my body the chastisement which this people deserves; for the honour of Thy Name and of the Holy Church I will cheerfully drain the chalice of suffering

and death; for Thy Truth knows that I have always ardently desired this, and that Thy grace has kindled this desire in my soul.' When she had uttered these words from the bottom of her heart, she understood that her prayer had prevailed. And in fact from that moment the popular sedition gradually calmed down, but the Saint like a pure victim had borne its expiation. The powers of hell had permission to torment her holy body, and exerted their utmost rage against her, so that those who witnessed it assured me it would be impossible for any one who had not seen what passed to form any idea of what she endured at their hands.

"These terrible sufferings daily increased; her skin seemed to adhere to her bones, and her body was reduced to a mere skeleton; yet she walked, prayed, and laboured without intermission, though to those about her she appeared rather like a phantom than a living person. Far from discontinuing her prayers, Catherine only increased their length and their fervour; her spiritual children saw most evident signs of the tortures heaped on her by the powers of darkness, but no one could apply a remedy. It was not the will of God; and notwithstanding the decay of her bodily powers her soul rose joyously and courageously above all that she endured. The more she prayed, the more she suffered; I was informed by those around her, and indeed by herself in a letter she wrote to me at that time, that in the midst of this martyrdom she heard the evil spirits shriek, 'Thou cursed wretch! thou hast always pursued us, and thou pursuest us still: now we shall take our revenge on thee; thou wouldst force us to depart hence, but we will first take thy life;' and so saying they redoubled their blows."[1]

Maimbourg[2] says "that the disturbances in the city were at this time quelled through the interference of Catherine, who exerted herself with God by her prayers, and with the Roman people by her remonstrances. She was so successful that the citizens not only returned to their duty, but used in Urban's defence the very arms they had taken up against him." He also states that the

[1] Legend, Part 3, ch. ii.

[2] Histoire du Grand Schisme, lib. i. p. 148.

Romans had first tried to poison the Pope, and then attacked him in the Vatican, when he courageously exhibited himself to the mob, clad in his Pontifical vestments, and overawed them by his presence.

In the meanwhile Catherine's sufferings continued daily to increase. We learn from the letter written by Barduccio Canigiani to his sister Maria Petriboni, a nun in the convent of St. Pietro di Monticella near Florence, that from the feast of the Circumcision of that year she had found it necessary completely to change her ordinary manner of living. The small amount of food she had hitherto been accustomed to take, caused her such suffering that it became impossible for her to touch it; and though consumed by a burning thirst, she was unable to swallow so much as a drop of water, though she seemed to be breathing fire. These sufferings were frightfully increased on Sexagesima Sunday, which fell that year on the 29th of January, from which day she never recovered her wonted state of health. We shall presently quote her own letters describing the extraordinary tortures of mind and body which she underwent at that time; but in order to render her words more intelligible, we shall first give the narrative as it is related by Raymund and her other biographers.

"From Sexagesima Sunday until the last day of April, when she passed out of this life," says Raymund, "her sufferings continued to increase. But one thing which she herself wrote to me was truly astonishing: up to that time, on account of the pain in her side and other infirmities which never left her, it had been her custom not to hear Mass until the hour of tierce; but through the whole of Lent she every morning went to the church of St. Peter's, heard Mass there, prayed for a long time afterwards, and returned home about the hour of vespers. Those who then saw her stretched on her bed thought she would never again be able to rise from it; but the next day, as soon as it was light, she would rise and set out again from her house in the Via del Papa, between the Minerva and the Campo di Fiore, and go to St. Peter's, walking quickly the whole way, a distance sufficient to fatigue a person in strong health."

The course here so exactly described will be familiar to many

of our readers. Catherine must every day have passed by the Minerva into the open market-place in front of the dark solemn portico of the Pantheon; thence pursuing her way along that street where now stands the beautiful church dedicated to her favourite patroness St. Mary Magdalen, until she found herself in the Via St. Lucia. Following its course she would come to the bridge which now bears the name of St. Angelo, but which at that time was called St. Peter's bridge; she would have passed under the walls of the castle, which presented much the same appearance then as now; for its marble walls had been levelled a year before by the triumphant populace, when they took possession of it after the surrender of the French garrison; and even thence she would have had a further walk of some distance to accomplish before reaching the Basilica of the apostles. I need not remind the reader that of the Basilica which she daily visited not a vestige now remains. It fell under the hammers of the Renaissance, in order that Michael Angelo might realise his magnificent promise—that "he would place the Pantheon in the clouds." He kept his word, and gave us the dome of St. Peter's; but he swept away the Basilica that had been founded by Constantine, and dedicated by St. Sylvester, where Charlemagne had been crowned Emperor of the West, and in which St. Catherine prayed. Eight of the marble columns which may now be seen in the balconies arranged above the pillars supporting the cupola, and which are said by tradition to have stood in the Temple of Solomon; and the famous mosaic of the "Navicella," designed by Giotto and preserved in the porch of the present building, are all that remain of the ancient Basilica.

Here it was, then, that on Sexagesima Sunday, as she was praying at the hour of vespers, a mysterious circumstance occurred, causing her such terrible agony that she never recovered its effects. This event is not mentioned by Raymund, nor is it more than obscurely alluded to by Barduccio in his narrative and by herself in her letters; but in the *Leggenda Minore*,[1] and again in his

[1] *Leg. Min.*, p. 156. In the Process, after describing her sufferings from the evil spirits and their threats of causing her death, he adds: *In cujus præsagium*

deposition, F. Thomas Caffarini gives us fuller particulars. It appears that whilst still in the Church of St. Peter's a mysterious vision or sign of her approaching death and of its cause was granted to her. She not only saw, but felt the Navicella, or Ship of the Church, laid on her shoulders. Crushed by the awful weight she sank fainting to the ground; she understood that she was in some way to give her life for the Church as a true victim, and from that moment her bodily strength began visibly to consume away. This remarkable incident was followed on her return home by an attack or crisis of supernatural suffering. "On the night of Monday following," says Barduccio, "after dictating a letter to me, she had so violent a crisis that we mourned her as dead. She remained for a long time without giving the smallest sign of life; then she suddenly arose, and seemed as though she had undergone no change whatever."

This "crisis" is more fully described in the Saint's own last letters to Raymund of Capua which shall now be quoted. The reader will observe the broken phraseology, and occasional confusion of sense, too clearly indicating the sufferings both mental and physical which were being endured by the writer.

"O my dearest Father!"[1] she writes, "I will not conceal from you the mysteries of God, but will relate them as briefly as I can, and as my weakness will permit. I will tell you also what I want you to do; only do not afflict yourself on account of what I shall say, for I know not what the Divine Goodness is about to do with me, whether I shall stay, or whether He is about to call me away. My Father, my Father, my beloved son! God has worked such wonderful things from the Feast of the Circumcision until

ostensum fuit in Sancto Petro de Urbe qualiter navicella ecclesiæ posita super spatulas virginis, in tantum Virginem ipsam compressit, quod moriendo in terram cecidit. (Process, 1299, 1300.) The same thing is affirmed by F. William Flete in his *Sermo in reverentiam Beatæ Katerinæ de Senis.*

[1] In the Aldine Edition this letter (No. 102) is dated Feb. 15, 1379; that is, according to our way of beginning the year, on January 1st, 1380, a fortnight after the events to which it refers. In this intervening fortnight the disputes between Urban and the Roman people must have broken out; and the threatened danger have been dissipated.

now, that it would be impossible for me to relate them. But we will leave that time and come to Sexagesima Sunday (Jan. 29th), on which day happened those mysteries of which I am going to speak. Never before did anything similar occur to me. Such was the agony of my heart, that my very garments were torn. I fell writhing in the chapel[1] like one in convulsion; had any one sought to restrain me, they would have caused my death.[2] On Monday evening I was much urged to write to the Christ on earth and to three Cardinals; I procured help and went to my cell, but when I had written to the Christ on earth,[3] I could write no more, so intense was the bodily pain I suffered. Shortly afterwards there began terrible attacks from the evil spirits, who threw me down: they were furious against me, as though I, poor worm of the earth, had torn out of their grasp what they had so long held possession of in the Church; and the terror I felt, joined to my other sufferings, was so great, that I wished to fly from my cell and go to the chapel, as though the cell had been the cause of my pains.

"I rose then, and being unable to walk, I leant on my son Barduccio; but immediately I was thrown down again; and lying on the ground it seemed as if my soul quitted the body; not in the same way as it did that other time,[4] because *then* I tasted the joy of the Blessed, enjoying with them the Sovereign Good; but now it seemed to me that I was a thing apart. I did not seem to be in my body, but I beheld my body as though it had

[1] The chapel; that is the private chapel she was allowed to have in her house, in which this crisis took place.

[2] This passage is very obscure, and indicates a mysterious access of suffering, the cause of which was wholly supernatural, and which the Saint was unable to express in ordinary language: *Giammai uno simile caso non mi parbe portare.* M. Cartier translates *caso* as accident. But though *caso* often has the sense of accident, I do not think it at all conveys what is here meant, which is evidently intended to describe what one might call *an ecstasy of supernatural suffering.*

[3] This letter is supposed by Gigli to be the same as that (No. 22) which has been quoted above (p. 235), a letter of calm practical advice. It may have been so, but the fact seems questionable.

[4] At the time of her mystic death.

belonged to some other person; and my soul, seeing the distress of him who was with me (*i.e.* Barduccio), wished to know if I could use my body so as to be able to say to him: 'My son, be not afraid.' But I found I could not move my tongue, or any other member, any more than if my body had been utterly without life. So I left the body as it was, and fixed my understanding on the abyss of the Holy Trinity. I remembered distinctly the needs of the Holy Church and of the Christian people. I cried to God, and confidently implored His help, showing Him my desires, and seeking to do Him holy violence by offering the Blood of the Lamb and the sufferings He had endured. I prayed so earnestly that I felt certain He would not reject my prayer; and then I prayed for all of you, and conjured Him to accomplish in you His will and my desires. Then I implored Him to deliver me from eternal damnation; and I remained thus so long that all the family wept for me as dead.

"Meanwhile the terror of the evil spirits was somewhat dissipated, and the humble Lamb offered Himself to my soul, saying: 'Be sure that I will satisfy thy desires, and those of My other servants, and you shall see that I am a good Master. I act like the potter who destroys and refashions his vessels as he pleases; and so I act with My vessels. This is why I have taken the vessel of thy body, and have refashioned it in the Garden of Holy Church, so that it shall be other than it was in time past.' And He added other gracious words, which I cannot here repeat. Then my body began to breathe a little, showing that the soul had returned to it. I was full of wonder, and there remained such a pain in my heart that I still feel it. Then all joy, all consolation, and all strength seemed taken from me, and being carried into the room above, it seemed to me full of demons who began a fresh attack, the most terrible I ever sustained; for they sought to make me believe that it was not I that was in my body, but an unclean spirit. But I invoked the Divine help with the utmost tenderness, refusing no suffering, but repeating, *Deus in adjuorium meum intende, Domine ad adjuvandum me festina!*

"Two days and two nights passed in these conflicts, but my

mind and my desire underwent no change, my soul always remained fixed in its Object,[1] though my body seemed reduced to nothing. On the feast of the Purification of Our Lady I wished to hear Mass: then all the mysteries were renewed, and God made known to me the great danger that was threatening the city and which has since appeared;[2] for Rome was on the point of revolting, and nothing was to be heard but blasphemies and irreverence; had He not pacified men's hearts, so that now, as I hope, all will end well. Then He imposed on me this obedience, that during the whole time of Lent I was to offer the desires of the whole family, and to cause Mass to be celebrated before them for the intention of Holy Church. Moreover, every morning I was to hear a Mass at daybreak, which you know is to me *naturally* an impossible thing; but in obeying Him, all things become possible. The desire to obey has taken such possession of me[3] that my memory retains no other thought, and my will desires no other thing; and not only does the soul refuse and reject all things here below, but even in conversing with the true citizens (*the Saints*) the soul cannot and will not share in their joys, but only in the hunger they had when they were pilgrims and sojourners in this life. With these and other like feelings which I know not how to express, my life is consumed and distilled for the Sweet Spouse; I, in this way, and the glorious martyrs by their blood. I pray the Divine Goodness that He may soon grant me to see the redemption of this people.

"When the hour of tierce comes, I rise from Mass, and you might see me going like one dead to St. Peter's, there to labour anew in the Ship of the Holy Church; and I remain thus until the hour of vespers; and I would fain remain in the same place day and night until I can see this people a little calmed, and reconciled with their Father. My body remains without any kind

[1] *La mente sempre stava fisso nell' obietto suo;* that is united to God, the Object of the soul.

[2] From this passage we see that the revolt of the Romans broke out after the 2nd of February.

[3] This is far too feeble a translation: *tanto s'e incarnato questo desiderio.*

of food, not even so much as a drop of water, and its sweet sufferings are so great that I have never felt anything like them, and my life hangs, as it were, by a thread. I know not what the Divine Goodness intends to do with me. I do not mean as to what I feel within, for I understand in that respect what He wills for me; but as to what I suffer in my body, *it seems to me I am to crown it by a new kind of martyrdom in the sweetness of my soul, I mean the Holy Church.* Perhaps He will then cause me to rise again with Him, and terminate both my miseries and my crucified desires; or He may use the ordinary means of restoring my bodily strength. I pray His mercy to accomplish His will in me, and not to leave you and the others orphans; but ever to direct you in the doctrine of Truth with true and perfect light: and I am sure He will do so.

"I beg and conjure you, my Father and my son, who were given to me by the sweet Virgin Mary, that if you believe that God has cast the eye of His mercy on me, you will renew your life; and as one dead to all sense of self, cast yourself into this Ship of Holy Church.[1] Be ever cautious in your conversations. Your actual cell you can have but little of, but I would have you ever keep and bear with you everywhere the cell of your heart; for, as you well know, so long as we are shut up there, the enemy has no power to harm us. Then let everything you do be directed and ordered according to God. And I beg of you mature your heart with a true and holy prudence, that your life may be exemplary in the eyes of seculars, and not conformed to the ways of the world. Let your liberality to the poor and the voluntary poverty you have always professed be renewed and reinvigorated with true and perfect humility. Whatever position or dignity God may bestow on you, relax not, but rather go down lower into the valley of humility. Love the table of the Cross, and there feed on souls, embracing that sweet mother of humble, faithful and con-

[1] *Questa Navicella della Santa Chiesa.* These repeated allusions to the Navicella are easily understood when we bear in mind the vision with which this mysterious crisis began; in which the Ship of the Church (the representation of which was daily before her eyes) appeared laid upon her shoulders.

tinual prayer, with holy watching. Every day celebrate Holy Mass, unless absolutely prevented. Fly light and useless conversations; and always show yourself grave in your words and conduct. Cast from you all tenderness for yourself, and all servile fear; for the Holy Church needs not such servants, but rather those who are severe to themselves and devoted to her.

"These are the things to which I conjure you to apply yourself. I also request you to collect the Book, and every other writing of mine with which I have sometimes occupied myself, and which you, Father Thomas, F. Bartholomew, and the Master,[1] and Master Thomas also, may find; and do with them whatever you think most for God's glory. I recommend to you also this family, begging you that, as far as possible, you will be its pastor, director, and father; keep them all in the bonds of charity and perfect union, that they may not be scattered as sheep having no shepherd. As to myself, I hope to be more useful to them after death than ever I have been in life. I beg the Eternal Truth that all the abundance of gifts and graces which He has granted to my soul, may be poured out upon all of you, that you may be as lights set upon a candlestick. I entreat you ask the Eternal Spouse that He may enable me manfully to accomplish His obedience, and that He will pardon the multitude of my sins. And I beseech you also to forgive every disobedience, irreverence, and ingratitude of which I have been guilty, and every pain and distress I may ever have caused you; humbly asking your blessing. Pray earnestly for me, and get prayers for me for the love of Jesus. Pardon me if I have ever written anything to pain you. I do not say these things to distress you; but I wish to discharge my duty, because I am in doubt, and know not what the goodness of God is about to do with me. Do not be troubled

[1] The persons here named are all familiar to the reader. By F. Thomas may be understood either F. Thomas della Fonte, who for ten years collected notes of her graces and revelations, or F. Thomas Antonio Nacci Caffarini, who afterwards composed the Supplement to her life. The Master is F. John Tantucci. *Master Thomas* is either Thomas Buonconti, or Thomas Petra, the Pope's Pronotary and Secretary, with whom, during her residence in Rome, she had become very intimate.

because we are separated from each other as to the body; fo. though, indeed, it would have been a great consolation to me to have had you near me, it is a far greater one to know that you are labouring for the Church. Labour, I beseech you, with more zeal than ever, for her needs were never greater; and for no persecution depart without permission of our Lord the Pope. Courage, courage in Christ our Sweet Jesus! and never be cast down. Abide in the sweet and holy love of God; Jesus Sweet ness, Jesus Love." (Letter 102.)

It would seem as though Catherine here brought her letter to a close, not having at the moment strength to finish all she had to say; and she takes up its thread in her next letter without any fresh introduction, so as to make of the two but one consecutive composition. She desired, while she was able, to say all that was in her heart to her spiritual Father; and having given her last earthly charges and directions, she now returns to the subject of what was passing in the interior of her soul.

"I was continually tormented by the ardent desire I had newly conceived in God's presence, because the eye of my understanding was fixed in the Eternal Trinity; and I beheld in that abyss the dignity of the rational creature, the misery which man incurs by mortal sin, and the necessities of the Holy Church, which God showed to me in His bosom. And I saw that no one can taste the Beauty of God in the abyss of the Holy Trinity, save by means of that sweet Spouse; wherefore all must needs pass through the door of Jesus crucified, and that door is only to be found in the Holy Church. I saw then how the Church gives life, for there is so much life in her, that there is no one who can put her to death; and she gives strength and light, so that no one can weaken or darken her in herself; and I saw that her fruit never fails or diminishes. Then the Eternal Deity said to me, 'All this dignity which your understanding cannot comprehend, is given to you from me. Look, then, with bitter sorrow, and you will see that men now only go to my Spouse for the sake of her outer vestment, that is her temporal substance; she is empty of those that seek her interior life, the fruit of the Blood.

He who does not bear that fruit which is the treasure of Charity with sincere humility, and in the light of holy faith, is not living, but dead.[1] He acts like the thief who takes what is not his. The fruit of the Blood belongs to him who has the treasure of love; for the Church was founded in love, *She is Love Itself*,[2] and I desire that all should give themselves (to her) by love, even as I have charged my servants to give as freely as they have received.[3] I complain that no one now serves the Church: on the contrary, all abandon her; but I shall know how to remedy this.'

"Then the grief and fire of my desires increasing, I cried to God, saying, 'O ineffable Love! what can I do?' And His goodness replied, 'Offer anew thy life, and give thyself no repose; IT IS FOR THIS THAT I HAVE CHOSEN THEE, AND ALL THOSE WHO FOLLOW THEE, OR WHO SHALL FOLLOW THEE HEREAFTER. Apply thyself, then, never to relax, but always to increase thy desires. For, as to Me, I ever apply Myself with love to assist you with temporal and spiritual graces; and in order that your souls may be occupied with no other thing, I have provided by kindling with great ardour her[4] whom I have chosen to direct you, training her and fitting her for the task by mysteries and hidden ways, so that she may consume herself in the service of My Church, and that you may serve it by humble, faithful, and continual prayers, and

[1] The language is obscure; but the meaning evidently is, that though many may seem outwardly to belong to the Church, as covered by her exterior garment, yet they are not living, but dead members, unless they bear the fruit of the Blood, *i.e.* unless they are in charity.

[2] *Ella è fondata in amore, ed è esso amore.*

[3] Freely you have received, freely give.—MATT. x. 8.

[4] *Quella;* this certainly means St. Catherine herself, the Mother of the spiritual family to which this exhortation is really addressed, although the first part of the paragraph is addressed to her. But the difference may be observed between the *thy* and *thou* used at the beginning and end of the paragraph, denoting her only; and the *you* and *yours*, used in this small portion, in which her children are being spoken to. A little further on, when Catherine is again individually addressed, the *thou* again appears. I may observe that in none of her letters is the phraseology more obscure than in these two, requiring close attention to develop the sense.

all necessary exercises, which I inspire to each one according to his degree. Consecrate then thy life, thy heart, and thy whole affection to this my Spouse, for My sake, forgetting thyself (*per me, senza te*). Look on Me, and behold the Bridegroom of this Spouse, even the Sovereign Pontiff. See his good and holy intention which has no limits; and as the Spouse is one, so also is the Bridegroom. I permit that by the violent means he employs, and by the fear he inspires in his subjects, he should purge the Church, but another will come who will tend her with love. And it will be with the Spouse as with the soul, wherein fear enters first to strip her of vices, and then love follows, to fill and clothe her with virtues.

"'All this will be accomplished by patient endurance. Sufferings are sweet to those who truly feed at her breast; nevertheless, tell My Vicar, that so far as he can, he must show himself peaceable, granting peace to those who will receive it. And tell the Columns of the Holy Church, the Cardinals, that if they would repair all these ruins, they must be united, and be like a mantle to cover what may appear defective in their Father. Let them be regular in their lives and households, fearing and loving Me, agreeing together, and not following their own interests. If they act thus, I, Who am Light, will give them the light needful to Holy Church. And seeing what they have to do, let them promptly and ardently propose it to My Vicar, who cannot resist their good will, because his intentions are good and holy.'

"But no tongue can tell the mysteries which I saw in my understanding, and felt in my heart. I passed that day in ecstasy, and when evening came, I was so transported with the affection of love, which I could not resist, that I was unable to go to the place of prayer. And feeling that the hour of death was drawing near, I reproached myself bitterly for having served the Spouse of Christ so negligently and ignorantly, and for being the cause that others should have done the same. I was full of these thoughts when God placed Himself before me. He is indeed always present to me, forasmuch as He contains all things in Himself. But this was in a new way, as though memory, will, and under-

standing had nothing more to do with the body. And I beheld the truth so clearly that in that abyss seemed to be renewed all the mysteries of Holy Church; all the graces past and present which I had ever received in my whole life; and *that day when God espoused my soul to Himself.* Then all seemed swallowed up in the fire of love which constantly increased, and I thought no more of anything save how I might sacrifice myself to God for the Holy Church, and take away the ignorance and negligence of those whom God had put into my hands. Then the demons were let loose on me, seeking to prevent me, and to diminish the fervour of my desire by their terrors. They struck the poor husk of my body, but the desire of my soul only kindled the more, and I cried, '*O Eternal God, accept the sacrifice of my life for the mystical body of Thy Holy Church. I have nothing to give save that which Thou hast given to me. Take my heart then, and press it out*[1] *over the face of Thy Spouse!*'

"Then the Eternal God, regarding me with an eye of clemency, took my heart, and pressed it out over the Holy Church. And He took it with such force, that if He had not strengthened me, not willing that the vessel of my body should be destroyed, I must that moment have died. Then the evil spirits cried with yet greater fury, as if they felt an intolerable pain; they used their utmost efforts to terrify me, threatening me that they would find a way of rendering useless what I had done. But because the powers of hell cannot resist humility joined to faith, the more they strove, the more ardently also I combated, as it were, with weapons of fire; and I heard words from the Divine Majesty so sweet and tender, and promises so full of joy, that in truth, I cannot speak of them. Then I said, 'Thanks, thanks be to the Most High, the Eternal, Who has placed us like knights on a

[1] *Premilo;* literally, *squeeze* it. Observe also the expression; "I have nothing to give *save what Thou hast given me;*" alluding to the heart mystically given her by Our Lord. In fact, this vision of her Heart is in some sense the complement of the earlier one, and helps us to see the mystical sense in which both are to be understood. This pressing out of the heart of St. Catherine over the Church has been made the subject of one of the designs in Francesco Vanni's Pictorial Life of the Saint.

field of battle to combat for His Spouse, protected by the shield of holy faith. THE FIELD IS WON![1] THE VICTORY IS OURS! thanks to that virtue and power which has discomfited the devil, the tyrant of the human race, but who has been defeated, not by man, but by God. Yes! the Enemy is overcome! not by the suffering of our bodies, but only by the fire of the burning and inestimable Charity of God!'" (Letter 103.)

To complete this narrative we must add the prayer which on this same 15th day of February was uttered by Catherine in ecstasy, and taken down from her lips by some of her children; and which forms too interesting a monument of this time to be omitted here.

Certain words which the Blessed Virgin Catherine of Siena spoke in prayer after the terrible crisis which she had in the night of Monday after Sexagesima, when she was wept for as dead by her family, after which she never regained health, but continually grew worse until the end.[2]

"O Eternal God, my good Master, who hast formed the vessel of Thy creature's body out of the slime of the Earth! O sweetest Love! Of how vile a thing hast Thou formed it, and yet Thou hast placed within it a treasure so great as the soul which bears Thine image, O eternal God. Thou, good Master, my sweet Love, art the Master who destroys and makes anew; Thou breakest and repairest this vessel according to Thy good pleasure. To Thee, Eternal Father, I, most miserable, offer anew my life for Thy sweet Spouse; that as many times as it may please Thy Goodness Thou mayest drag it out of my body and restore it to my body, each time with more pain than before; in order that I may see the reformation of Thy sweet Spouse, the Holy Church. O Eternal God, I recommend to Thee this Spouse.

"I also recommend to Thee my beloved children; and I pray Thee, the Most High and Eternal Father, if it please Thee to take

[1] *El campo è rimaso a noi!*

[2] Our translation of this prayer, of the *Ultime parole*, and of the *Transito*, are all taken from the corrected edition of Signor Grottanelli.

me out of this body and not to let me return thither, that Thou wilt visit them with Thy grace, and when they are dead, make them to live again in true and perfect light. Bind them together with the sweet bonds of charity, that they may die enamoured [1] of Thy sweetest Spouse. And I pray that none of them may be snatched out of Thy hands, but that Thou wouldst deign to pardon them all their iniquities. And pardon me also my great ignorance and negligence committed against Thy Church, and for not having accomplished all I might and should have done. *Peccavi Domine, miserere mei.*

"I offer and recommend to Thee my beloved children who are as my very soul. And if it please Thy goodness to detain me yet longer in this vessel, do Thou, the Sovereign Physician, heal and sustain it, that it be not entirely torn to pieces. O Eternal Father, give us Thy sweet benediction!

"*February* 15, 1380."

Who would dare to comment on such words as these? They are as far above our criticism or our praise as the Divine mysteries they record are above our experience. Here, then, we behold the handmaid of Christ crowned at last "with a new kind of martyrdom;" accepted as the victim of the Church; and giving to God the heart He had once given to her, that He might annihilate it for the renovation of His holy Spouse. It is the completion of her course, the sublime consummation of her holocaust; there is now nothing more to relate than the story of her last passage.

But to you who read these words, are there none among them that have thrilled you through and through, as though the eyes of your glorious Mother had been turned and fixed on *you* as she uttered them? When she cried to our Lord in loving agony, saying: "O ineffable Love! what can I do?" He replied, "Offer thy life anew, and give thyself no repose; IT IS FOR THIS THAT I HAVE CHOSEN THEE, AND ALL THOSE WHO FOLLOW THEE, OR WHO SHALL FOLLOW THEE HEREAFTER." Of whom was He

[1] *Spasimati*, a word expressive of the most intense and passionate love.

speaking, if not of the children of the Saint; *her family* then living on earth, and all those who were in time to come to be numbered among her children? And who are these? Oh, daughters of St. Dominic and St. Catherine, scattered over the wide world; you who wear her habit, and glory in calling her your Mother, whether it be in Italy or France, in England, or Holland, or America; you whose Order has given to the Church a white-robed company of saints, who became saints by treading in her footsteps, and whose names sound like sweetest music in our ears,—a Rose, "first flower of the new world," a Margaret, a Benvenuta, a Sybillina, a Lucy, and an Osanna;—you who in China have realised by hundreds her dearest wish of dyeing her white robe red in the blood of martyrdom, who in the Western Indies are reproducing her heroic work of tending the lepers;[1] whose companies are multiplying even on our English soil, engaged on a common work, under one watchword,—"God's honour, and the salvation of souls!"—it was of *you* she thought, it was to *you* she spoke in that supreme moment of her life. She would give you with her own lips the rule that was to guide you; she would point with her own hand to the path that you should follow. Nay, rather, she would have you hear, not from her lips alone, but from those of your Eternal Spouse, the meaning of your sublime vocation:

"OFFER YOURSELVES ANEW; GIVE YOURSELVES NO REPOSE; IT IS FOR THIS THAT I HAVE CHOSEN YOU!"

[1] The Hospital of Lepers at Cocorite, in the island of Trinidad, is now served by nuns of the Third Order, belonging to the (French) congregation of St. Catherine of Siena.

CHAPTER VII

The Shadow of Death

MARCH AND APRIL, 1380

ST. CATHERINE'S letters to Raymund of Capua quoted in the last chapter were written, as we have seen, on the 15th (and probably the 16th) of February; that is, on the Wednesday and Thursday that preceded the third Sunday of Lent. From the commencement of that holy season she had applied herself with so much fervour to meditation, notwithstanding her infirmities, that those about her were astonished at the abundance of her sighs and pious tears. Her prayer was at all times so fervent that one hour so spent weakened her frame more than two days of uninterrupted spiritual exercises would have exhausted any other person. Every morning after communion she had to be carried from her chapel and laid on her bed as one dead. Yet in an hour or two she would rise and go to St. Peter's, and stay there, as has been said, till vespers, returning home in almost a lifeless condition. And all this time her children marvelled to see with what a joyful countenance she would bear this fatigue, and with what sweet and affable courtesy she would welcome all who came to her, whether to consult her on the affairs of their souls, or on any business for the common good, though every one could see she was reduced to the last extremity. So she continued until the third Sunday in Lent, when she was forced to yield to the immense sufferings that overwhelmed her body, and the anguish that rent her soul in beholding the sins committed against God, and the dangers that threatened the Church. She was a mass of interior and exterior suffering, and thus she remained during eight entire weeks, being

unable even to raise her head. In the midst of that martyrdom, she frequently said, "*These pains are physical, but they are not natural; God allows the demons to torment me thus.*" It was evident that what she stated was correct, and that her sufferings were wholly supernatural. But at each new torture she joyously raised her heart and her eyes to God, saying: "Thanks be to Thee, O my everliving Spouse, Who dost continually crown Thy poor and wretched handmaid with new proofs of Thy favour."

At this time her appearance was that of a skeleton covered with a transparent skin; her countenance, however, beaming with an angelic expression; whilst she was so entirely prostrate in strength that she could not so much as turn herself in her bed from one side to the other.[1]

It was in this state that she was found by F. Bartholomew Dominic, when, towards the close of Lent, he was despatched to Rome on business by command of his Provincial. He had been hitherto detained at Siena by the duties of his office as Prior of San Domenico, so that a year had probably passed since last they met. And thus during this long time of suffering and anxiety Catherine had been deprived of his company, as well as of that of so many others who enjoyed her closest confidence, God so permitting it for the increase of her sacrifice and her merit. He arrived in Rome on Holy Saturday, and at once hastened to Catherine's house, not being aware of the condition in which he should find her. His exact and beautiful account of what he witnessed shall be given in his own words:

"I found her lying on boards, surrounded by other boards, so that she seemed, as it were, in a coffin. I approached her, hoping to be able to converse with her as usual. Her body was so emaciated that it looked as though it had been dried in the sun, and no longer presented its former beauty. The sight was heart-breaking, and I said to her, weeping, 'Mother, how do you find yourself?' When she recognised me she tried to express her joy, but she could not speak, and I was obliged to put my ear close

[1] In the above account are blended together the accounts given by Barduccio in his Letter, and by Caffarini in the third part of his Supplement.

to her lips in order to catch her reply, that 'all was going on well, thanks to our merciful Saviour!' I then told her the business on which I had come, and added, 'Mother, to-morrow will be the Feast of the Pasch,[1] I should like to celebrate it here, so as to give Holy Communion to yourself and your spiritual children.' She replied, 'Oh! would that our sweet Saviour would indeed permit me to communicate!'

"I left her, and returned next day to fulfil my promise. I approached her in order to hear her confession and give her absolution; no one hoped to see her go to Holy Communion; for during several days she had been incapable of making the least movement. However I gave her for a penance to ask of God, for her consolation and ours, the grace of receiving Communion on so great a festival; and I then went to the Altar which was quite close to her bed. I prepared the Host and then commenced Mass. Catherine remained motionless until the Holy Communion; as soon as I had terminated and had taken the ablutions, she got up suddenly, to the great astonishment of all present, who shed tears of joy; she advanced unassisted as far as the Altar, knelt down with her eyes closed and her hands clasped, and remained thus until she had received the consecrated Host, and the wine which it is customary to present for washing the mouth. She afterwards fell into her ordinary ecstasy, and when she came forth from it, it was impossible for her to return to her bed; her companions carried her there, and she remained on it immovable as before. God permitted her, however, to converse with me during the few days that I still remained in Rome, and it was then that she explained to me the incredible pains and sufferings that the demons had forced her to undergo. She prayed with unabated ardour for the peace of the Church; she desired and asked of God to expiate in her person the sins of those who separated the faithful from the real Sovereign Pontiff, Urban VI. '*Be assured*,' said she, '*that if I die, the sole cause of my death is the zeal which burns and consumes me for the Holy Church. I suffer*

[1] This Easter Day must have fallen on March 25th, St. Catherine's 33rd birthday.

gladly for her deliverance, and, if need be, I am ready to die for her.'

"The affairs that led me to Rome being terminated, my companion pressed me to return. I constantly resisted, and I told this to Catherine. She said that I must go back to him that sent us. 'Mother,' said I, 'how can we go and leave you in such extremity? Were I absent and informed of your condition, I would quit all and hasten to your side. No, I cannot resolve to depart without seeing you better, or without at least having grounds for hope in your recovery.' Catherine said: 'My son, you well know what great consolation I experience in seeing those whom God has given me, and whom I love in the Truth. It would give me the greatest pleasure would our Lord grant me the presence of Father Raymund as well as yours; but it is His intention that I should be deprived of this, and as I desire not my will but His, you must depart. You know that at Bologna a Chapter of the Order will soon be celebrated for the election of a Master-General; Father Raymund will be nominated; I wish you to be there with him, and always to be obedient to him. I command you this as far as I have the power to do so.'

"I then told her that I would do whatever she commanded me, as soon as I saw her better in health, and I added: 'If it is God's will that I go, ask Him to restore you to health before my departure.' She promised me to do so, and when I returned on the following day, I found her so calm and cheerful, that I approached her full of hope. But she, who had hitherto remained motionless, extended her arms towards me and embraced me so affectionately that I could not refrain from shedding tears of joy; it was to make known to me God's will, and to exhort me to depart. 'The Lord had deceived me,' to speak like the Prophet —*Seduxisti me, Domine, et seductus sum; fortior me fuisti et invaluisti* (Jer. xx. 7). I left Rome. A short time after I had returned to Siena, a letter informed me that Catherine had quitted this life to be united to the Spouse Whose embraces she so ardently desired."

We have more than once named Master Thomas Petra, the

Pope's Secretary, who had first made Catherine's acquaintance at Avignon, and who had become very intimate with her during her residence in Rome. She had conceived a great affection for this good and loyal man whom she used to call her father. One day during the last few weeks of her life he found her in a garden belonging to a lady in Rome, whither her disciples had carried her by way of giving her some refreshment. He approached her, and observing her ghastly pallor and extreme emaciation, "Mother," he said, "it seems to me that your Spouse is about to take you out of this life; have you made all necessary dispositions?" "What dispositions," she replied, "can a poor woman like me make?" He replied, "It would be an admirable will and testament if you were to make known to each one of your disciples what he ought to do after your death. I beg of you, for the love of God, to do this; I am sure all will obey you as readily as I shall." "Willingly then," she replied, "I will do it with God's grace." Then he continued, "I have another favour to ask you, and I beseech you to grant it for the love of God. Obtain from your Divine Spouse that I may know the state of your soul after death." "That," she replied, "does not seem possible; for either the soul is saved, and then the bliss it enjoys makes it forget the miseries of this world: or it is lost, and then the torments it endures prevents its obtaining any such favour." However, she promised him to grant his request, if God would permit, and indeed she did do so, in the manner hereafter to be noticed.

Meanwhile the accounts which F. Bartholomew and others brought to Siena alarmed all her friends. Lapa had already rejoined her daughter, and Stephen was impatient to follow. The letters he received from the Saint's companions told him of her aggravated sufferings, of her combats with the demons, and the state of utter prostration to which she was reduced. He was now in haste to get his affairs terminated with all despatch, so that he might at once rejoin her: for her own words in some of her last letters to him kept recurring to his mind—"When will you come, Stephen? Oh, come soon!" One night as he was

praying with the Brethren of the Company of La Scala, he distinctly heard these words: "Go to Rome! make haste! the departure of thy Mother is at hand!" When he told the others, they all agreed that it was a Divine warning, and that he ought to hasten to Rome without more delay. With his parents' permission, therefore, he set out at once, and reaching the city, proceeded at once to Catherine's residence. When he entered that beloved presence the sight of her wasted form and transfigured countenance told him that the end was indeed near at hand. And then once more he heard the sound of that voice, so well remembered and so dearly loved, and of which for eighteen weary months he had been deprived. "Thou hast come at last, my son," she said, "and hast been obedient to the voice of God, Who will not fail to make known to thee His will. Go therefore, and confess thy sins, and prepare with thy companions to give thy life for the Sovereign Pontiff, Urban VI." This, then, was their greeting, in which nature, truly, had no part; yet he had the satisfaction of once more discharging his old office of her secretary, for she bade him write a letter for her to F. Bartholomew Dominic to bid him a last farewell. "My son Stephen," she said, "write to Siena to F. Bartholomew, and tell him the Lord is exercising His mercy on me. Therefore, let him and the rest of his brethren at San Domenico beseech my Spouse Jesus that He would suffer me to lay down my life, even to the shedding of my blood, to manifest His glory in the face of the Church."[1]

We do not know the exact date of Stephen's arrival in Rome, and we cannot tell, therefore, for how many days he was permitted the sad happiness of watching by his Mother's dying couch. They cannot have been many; but few as they were, they did their work. They unveiled to him the secret of his own heart, and, setting the seal on all that had gone before, they accomplished that wondrous transformation of the natural man to which

[1] *Pro ejus gloria in faciem ecclesiæ illustrandum* (Vit. Step. Mac., ch. xi.). This expression may bear allusion to that mystic pressing out of her heart's blood over the face of the Church, spoken of in the last chapter.

can be given no other name than "the change of the right Hand of the most High." How could it be otherwise? They who know what it is to watch by the death-bed of one of God's servants, who have tasted the inexpressible sweetness of those last days, a sweetness so strange that at times we know not whether to call it joy or sorrow,—whether it be of earth or heaven,—can understand from their own memories something of what must have been passing in Stephen's soul. They will recall the quiet house, the gentle footsteps, the sense of Divine and angelic presences in that chamber from which all thoughts of earth, all clamour of human passions, all regrets, all resentments, all desires even, were banished. They will realise the calm and hush that must have fallen on every soul in the little family, as they stood round that bed of boards, and beheld the attenuated form and the countenance of their Mother, which, says Caffarini, shone, "as it had been the face of an angel."[1] The hours slipped by so gently, but alas! so fast; till feeling that few were now left her, Catherine, remembering the promise she had made to Thomas Petra, bid them all gather around her that she might give them a parting exhortation. It need hardly be matter of surprise that the words she then spoke were carefully noted and preserved by those present; and we shall give a faithful translation of them from what is regarded as the most authentic copy in existence.

THE LAST WORDS.

"The Blessed and most happy Virgin Catherine, feeling herself growing much worse on account of her many and grievous infirmities, called about her all her spiritual sons and daughters in Christ, and made them a devout and profitable exhortation, encouraging them in the practice of virtue; and specially to certain things which she said she had taken as the principle and foundation of all perfection; which were briefly these. First, she said that from the beginning she had understood that whoso would give himself wholly to God, must first strip his heart of all

[1] Sup., Part 3, Trat. 2, § 2.

sensitive love of all created things out of God; because the heart cannot be wholly given to God unless it be free, open, and without doubleness. And she declared that from her earliest days it had been her principal study to do this, desiring to seek God by the way of suffering.

"She said also that she had fixed the eye of her understanding in the light of living faith, holding it for certain that all whatsoever happened to her or to others proceeded from God, out of the great love He bears His creatures, and not out of hate. And thence she had conceived a great love and promptitude for holy obedience to the commands of God and of her superiors, remembering that all their commands proceeded from God, either for the needs of her salvation, or for the increase of virtue in her soul. And she added: 'This I will say in the presence of my Sweet Creator, that this point, by His goodness, I have never transgressed.'

"Next, she said that God had shown her that none can ever arrive at perfection nor acquire true virtue save by means of humble, faithful, and continual prayer, which she said is the mother that conceives and nourishes all virtues in the soul; and without it, all languish and fade away. To which prayer she exhorted us most earnestly to apply ourselves, declaring that there were two kinds thereof, namely, vocal and mental prayer. To vocal prayer, she said, we should attend at the appointed hours; but to mental prayer continually, striving always to know ourselves and God's great goodness to us.

"And she said that in order to arrive at purity of heart, we should guard ourselves against all judgment of our neighbour, and all idle speaking of the doings of others, looking only to the will of God in His creatures; and saying with much earnestness that for no cause ought we to judge another. For even if that which we should see were evident sin, yet we ought not to judge it, but with true and holy compassion, to offer it to God in humble and devout prayer.

"And speaking another time on this same subject, she rendered this witness of herself to her spiritual Father, that never, on

account of any persecution, murmurs, detraction, injury, or evil-speaking, had she suffered herself to think anything in her mind, save that they who so treated her were moved thereto by charity and zeal for her salvation. And she gave thanks to the inestimable goodness of God, that by this light He had delivered her from the peril of judging her neighbour.

"Lastly, she said that she had ever placed a great hope and confidence in Divine Providence, and invited and urged us all to do the same, which she said she had found passing great and admirable even from her childhood; adding: 'And you yourselves have seen and experienced the same, and that so largely, that if our hearts were not harder than stones, our coldness and hardness must be dissolved thereby. Therefore, have a great love for this sweet Providence, which will never fail those who trust in it, and, specially, will never be wanting to you.'

"These, and many other things, she said, comforting and instructing us, and humbly exhorting us to that which our Saviour left as His testament to His disciples, namely, that we should love one another. And she repeated again and again with great fervour, 'Love one another, my children, love one another; for by this you will show that you are willing to have me for your Mother. And I will hold you to be my beloved children, and if you are virtuous, you will be my joy and my crown: and I will pray the Divine Goodness that the abundance of life, and all the gifts and graces which He has been pleased to pour into my soul, He will also bestow on each one of you.'

"Then she commanded us all, saying: 'My children, never relax your desires for the reformation and good estate of Holy Church; but always offer burning tears, together with humble and continual prayers in the sight of God for that most sweet Spouse, and for Pope Urban, the Vicar of Christ;' saying on her own part, 'For a long time have I cherished this burning desire; but chiefly about seven years ago it seemed to me that God Himself placed it in my heart. And from that time there has been no day that I have not offered myself before Him with sweet and sorrowful longings. And on that account has His Goodness been

pleased to lay on this frail body so many pains and infirmities. But specially in this present time it seems that my sweet Creator has done with me as He did with Job, giving licence to the demons to torment and persecute me as they please. For I never remember at any time to have endured such tortures as now I bear. Thanks be to His infinite Goodness which makes me worthy to endure something for the praise and glory of His Name, and for His sweet Spouse, the Church. And now, at last, it seems to me that my beloved Spouse, after so many earnest and burning desires and bodily pains, wills my soul to depart out of this darksome prison, and return to its final end. I say not that I see His will in this matter with any certainty, but so it seems to me;' and she added, 'hold this for certain, my sweetest and dearest children, that when I depart out of this body, I shall truly have consumed and given my life in the Church and for the Church; which thing is a most singular favour.' Then seeing us all weeping bitterly around her, she comforted us, saying: 'Dear children, let not this make you sad, but rather rejoice and be exceeding glad; considering that I am leaving a place of many sufferings, and that I go to rest in the peaceful sea,—the Eternal God; and to be for ever united with my most sweet and loving Spouse. And I promise you that I will be more perfectly with you, and of more use to you there, than ever I could be here: because I am leaving darkness, to pass into the true and Eternal light.

"'Nevertheless I leave both life and death to the will of my Creator. If He sees that abiding here I can be of use to any one, I refuse neither labour, nor pain, nor torment; but I am ready, for His love and for the salvation of my neighbour, to give my life a thousand times a day, and each time, if that were possible, with greater suffering than before.'

"And so having finished these words, she called us her children to her, each one by name, and gave to each a charge what they should do when she should have departed out of this life: and each of us with reverence and humility received her obedience. Then she humbly prayed us to pardon her if she had not given

us the holy doctrine, and the example of a virtuous life to which she was bound; and if she had not helped us with prayer before God as she should have done; and, moreover, if she had not sufficiently supplied our temporal necessities; as well as for any pain, distress, or trouble, of which she might have been the cause; saying: 'Every fault has been through ignorance; but I declare before God, I both have had and continue to have an ardent desire for your perfection and salvation, which if you attain, dear children, you will be my glory and my crown.' And then at last, whilst we all remained still weeping, she gave her blessing in Christ to each one of us, after her accustomed manner."

With regard to what is here stated concerning the separate charge which she delivered to each one of her disciples as to the state of life they should embrace after her death, more exact and interesting particulars have been left by her other disciples. She appointed Alexia to be the Mother and Superioress over the Sisters of Penance, in her place; commending her spiritual sons to the care of F. Raymund of Capua, whom she bade them regard and obey as their Father. She also sent a message to F. William Flete, bidding him not forget her children; and to the absent Neri di Landoccio, to whom she made known that his vocation was to the state of a hermit. "And lastly," says Stephen, "turning to me, and pointing to me with her finger, she said, 'As to *you*, I desire you, on the part of God, and in the name of holy obedience, to enter into the Order of the Carthusians, for it is there that God would have you to be, and it is there He calls you.'"

The place and the hour, when she was to speak to him that "Word of Christ," which until now she had withheld, were come at last: and when she uttered that word, a great light made itself sensible in Stephen's heart. "I say this to the honour of God and His servant Catherine," he writes, "that when she ordered me, in the name of holy obedience, to enter among the Carthusians, I had never once so much as thought of that or any other Order. Nevertheless, after her departure, I felt in my heart so

great a desire to obey her, that if the whole world had opposed me, I should have made not the least account of it."

Caffarini tells us that during these last days she also gave her disciples other instructions, specially on the danger of self-love, the root of all evil; and that she acknowledged to them that she had once been filled with a most intense longing for solitude, desiring to live apart from all men in some grotto or forest; and that she had even prayed to our Lord with much earnestness that He would grant her this favour; but she felt Him reply within her, "Many live as to the body in their cell, and with their affections in the world: I will that thy cell should be the knowledge of thy sins and infirmities. Hollow out this cell in thy heart, and abide there in compunction. He who will do so will attain perfection, for wheresoever he goes, and with whomsoever he speaks, he will still remain retired, solitary, and enclosed."

And now there only remains for us to relate the end; but not in our words shall the tale be told, but in those of the loving and broken hearts who stood by Catherine in her agony, and beheld her yield her glorious soul into the hands of her Creator. The narrative we are about to give is called the "Transito," or last passage. It is taken almost word for word from Barduccio's letter to his sister,[1] which has before been quoted; though the writer of this particular document in its existing form is believed by Gigli to be no other than Stephen Maconi; and judging by the language used in the introductory paragraph, he would seem to have written it almost immediately after the orphaned family had sustained their unspeakable loss.

[1] In the footnotes we have indicated a few of the variations in the two accounts.

CHAPTER VIII

The Transito

APRIL 29TH, 1380

We will now write the order of the glorious and happy end of this most sweet Virgin, according as our base intellects are able to comprehend the same, overcome as they are with immense grief.

"THE faithful Spouse of Jesus Christ having now lain eight weeks without being able to stand upright, suffering many unspeakable pains and torments, she came at last to such a state that she seemed almost to resemble those forms whereby painters depict death; that is, in her body and limbs, for as to her face, that remained up to the time of her burial, angelic and devout. And some days before her death she lost all power of motion, specially from her waist downwards, and could not so much as turn herself in the least degree.

"On the Sunday before the Ascension, being the 29th day of April, in the year 1380, there was a great change,[1] and it seemed to us that she was about to fall into her agony. She therefore caused all her family to be called, and with much humility and devotion, without speaking, made a sign to the priest that she desired the absolution from her faults and their penalties[2] which was given her by Master John the Third, of the Order of St.

[1] Barduccio says, "The night preceding the Sunday there was a great crisis two hours before dawn."

[2] *Da colpa e da pena*, that is, not the absolution given in the Sacrament of Penance, but that which enabled her to receive the Indulgence granted by the Pope at the hour of death. This is apparent from what follows a little later.

Augustine, Master in Theology. She continued consumed and sinking all day, until there seemed no sign of life left, but a continual, feeble, and painful breathing. It was therefore decided to give the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, and this was done by the hands of the Abbot of St. Anthimo, at which time she appeared to lie as one unconscious.

"Shortly after having received the holy unction, there appeared a great change in her; and by the movements of her countenance and of her arms she seemed to be enduring a grievous assault from the powers of darkness. She remained in terrible conflict with them for one hour and a half, making various signs, which we did not understand, with her eyes and her whole head. Having passed about half that dreadful time in silence, she at length began to speak, and to say: *Peccavi Domine, miserere mei.* And she said this more than sixty times, each time raising her right arm, and letting it fall again, striking the bed whereon she lay. Then she changed her words, and said, many times, 'O God, have mercy on me; take not from me the memory of Thee!' Then she said, 'O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me;'[1] and, saying this, she did not move her arm. Then she used other devout and humble words; and once, with holy boldness, she said, as though answering some one who accused her, 'Vainglory? never! but the true glory of Christ crucified.' When the space of time I have named had passed, her face suddenly changed, and from being dark and troubled, it became joyous and angelic, shining with such beautiful serenity that it was a great joy only to look on her. Her eyes, which before had appeared tearful and almost extinct, kindled, as it were, and became bright and resplendent. It seemed as though she had come forth out of some dark abyss; and the spectacle softened somewhat the grief of all her afflicted children, who stood weeping around her with a sorrow that may be imagined, for we thought at that moment that she was miraculously delivered from all her infirmity. She was then lying supported on the bosom of Monna

[1] Here Barduccio's account is rather different. He says she repeated the words *Sancte Deus, miserere mei.*

Alexia, her beloved daughter and disciple in Christ; but she now tried to rise, and we assisted her to sit upright, still leaning on Alexia. We had placed before her a little table on which were some relics of the Saints and certain beautiful images.[1] She immediately fixed her eyes on the crucifix which was in the centre, and began to pray; and as she prayed, to accuse herself generally before God of all her sins, and in particular she said, '*Mea culpa!* O Eternal Trinity, I have often and miserably offended Thee by my negligence, ignorance, ingratitude, disobedience, and many other faults. Woe is me! that I have not observed Thy general commands, nor those which Thy Goodness has laid on me in particular.' And often, as she thus accused herself, she struck her breast. 'Alas!' she exclaimed, 'I have not observed the command Thou gavest me to seek always Thy honour and the good of my neighbour; I have done the contrary, seeking my own honour and flying from labour, when I might have succoured others in their needs. O Eternal God! Thou didst command me to lose and abandon myself, and to seek nought save Thy glory and the salvation of souls; delighting in taking that sweet food upon the table of the most holy Cross. And I have ever sought my own consolation, and not cared to see souls in the hands of the demon. Thou, O most merciful Father! hast constantly invited me to oblige Thee by intense, sweet, loving, and crucified desires, with tears, and with humble, faithful, and continual prayer, to grant the salvation of the whole world, and the reformation of the Holy Church, promising by such means to show mercy to the world, and to reform Thy Spouse; and I, miserable that I am, have never responded to Thy call, but have slumbered on the bed of negligence. And therefore are all these evils come upon the world, and so much ruin on Thy Church. Woe, woe is me! O sweetest Lord! Thou hast set me to govern souls, and hast given me all these beloved sons and daughters, that I should love them with a passing great love, and guide them carefully in the way of truth; and I have been to them nothing but

[1] This had been given her at Avignon by a Cardinal. The frame of relics is still preserved in the Sacristy of San Dominico.

a mirror of misery. I have not taken care of them; I have not helped them with humble and continual prayer. I have not given them the example of a good and holy life, or fed them with the doctrine of the word in time of need. Oh, miserable soul of mine! I have not had the reverence I was bound to have for such innumerable gifts and graces; so many sweet pains and torments, that Thou hast been pleased to lay upon this frail body. I have had no regard to the ineffable love with which Thou hast given them to me, and so I have not received them with the loving affection that I ought.

"'Alas, my sweetest Love! Eternal Spouse of my soul, Thou, for Thine inestimable goodness, didst choose me, even in my childhood, to be Thy Spouse; and I have not been faithful to Thee, but most unfaithful: for I have not kept my memory full of Thee and of the remembrance of Thy benefits. My intellect has not been fixed in Thy truth, and in the sole knowledge of Thy Will; and my will has not been disposed to love and follow Thee with all my strength, as thou didst require of me.'

"Of these and many other similar faults did this most pure dove accuse herself, more, perhaps, for our example than for her own need. Then she turned to the priest and said, 'Absolve me, for the love of Jesus crucified, from these sins which I have confessed before God, and from all others which I do not remember.' And he did so. Then she said, 'Now absolve me from my faults and their penalties;' he replied, 'You have been absolved.'[1] She said, 'I have had this indulgence granted me both by Pope Gregory and by Pope Urban; give me now Pope Urban's indulgence.' For like a soul athirst for the Blood, she seemed to seek by what means it might be poured over her head in yet greater abundance. Her wish was granted, and after this, still keeping her eyes fixed on the Crucifix, she began once more to pray, speaking to God high things, which for our sins we were not worthy to understand, save a little here and there; and also because of the pain which she had in her breast, which did not permit of her speaking very distinctly.[2]

[1] See p. 266.

[2] "We caught a few words, bending over her lips to listen, but my grief prevented me from hearing much." (Barduccio.)

"Then she addressed herself to some of her children who had not been present when she made her exhortation, and she imposed on them her obedience, as to what they were to do. And she asked pardon of them and of the others, not for her, but for our faults; and after this she returned to her prayer.[1]

"Oh, how can I say what it was to see the humility and reverence with which, again and again, she asked and received the blessing of her weeping and afflicted mother, Lapa: most certainly it was a sweet sorrow! What a devout spectacle to see that sorrowful mother recommending herself to her holy daughter, and asking and receiving her blessing in return! Truly it pierced one's very soul to behold it! And specially did the mother implore of her daughter to obtain fortitude for her from God, that in her deep affliction she might not offend Him. And certainly in this matter God both has wrought and still works wonderful things. But all this did not disturb her from her prayer, but she continued praying even while she spoke.

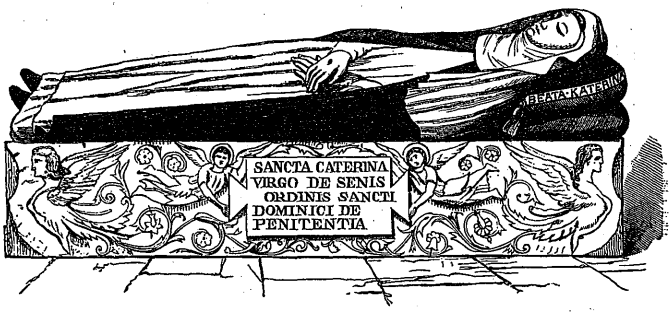
"And the end drawing nigh, she made a special prayer for the Church and for Pope Urban VI., whom she declared to be the true Pontiff and Vicar of Christ upon earth. And with great fervour she prayed for all her beloved children whom God had given her, and whom she loved with a passing great love; using many of those words which our Lord spake when He prayed to His Eternal Father, imploring earnestly, and with most sweet words, that every hard heart might become softened. Then at last she said, 'Father, they are Thine, and Thou gavest them to me, and now I give them back Thee. Eternal Father, do Thou keep and guard them; and I pray that none of them may be snatched out of Thy hands.' And so praying for us,[2] she signed and blessed us. Then once more making the sign of the Cross, she blessed all those who were not there corporally present. Then feeling the approach of her long and much-desired end,

[1] "She spoke a few words to Lucio and to me, and to another." (Barduccio.) This Lucio was one of her Roman disciples.

[2] "She spoke with such tenderness, we thought our hearts would cleave asunder." (Barduccio.)

still persevering in prayer, she said, 'Lord, Thou callest me to come to Thee, and I come; not in my own merits, but only in Thy mercy, which mercy I ask in virtue of the most Precious Blood of Thy dear Son!' At the last she exclaimed several times, 'BLOOD! BLOOD!' Then gently pronouncing the words, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit,' bowing her head she gave up the ghost.

"Her death took place about the hour of sext, on the Sunday before named, being the Feast of St. Peter Martyr, of her Order. And we kept her precious body until Tuesday evening, during which time it remained fresh, of devout and angelic beauty, and emitting a sweet fragrance. Her arms, hands, fingers, feet, and neck, and all her other members, being as flexible as though her holy soul had not departed from the body. Deo gratias. Amen.



TOMB OF ST. CATHERINE

CHAPTER IX

Migravit ad Sponsum! 1380

SHE had passed to her Spouse! the combat was over: the three and thirty years of labours and sufferings had been crowned with a loving martyrdom for the Church, and she had passed to her reward! The weeping children knelt a while round the sacred remains; "they were in great heaviness, for the loss of the good Mother who had departed from them," says the old legend, "and who had left them orphans in this wicked world. And they did what they could to conceal her death from the people, both to avoid the great press and tumult which they knew would be made if her death were once noised abroad; and also, that they might with more quietness confer together concerning the manner of her funeral." By general consent the direction of these last duties seems to have been committed to Stephen Maconi; and it was he who bore the sacred remains on his own shoulders, to the church of the Minerva, watching by them day and night until the moment came for their interment.

In a very short time the news of Catherine's death spread through the city, and vast crowds thronged the church, moving forward like great waves, says Raymund, that they might kiss the

feet, or so much as touch the garments, of the Saint. The impetuous devotion exhibited by the people excited fears lest they might even seek to dismember the holy body in the church; for which reason it was judged prudent to place it behind the iron screen of the chapel of St. Dominic. There it remained for two days, during which time no change was observable in the countenance, and the limbs remained perfectly flexible, as in life. The people continued to pour into the church, bringing with them their sick and infirm friends, and recommending them to the prayers of the Saint. Many on touching the body, or even only articles that had been laid on it, received their cure; and the noise of these miracles spreading abroad, increased the eagerness of the multitudes, so that the whole population of Rome may be said to have collected in the church.

Meanwhile a circumstance occurred, to explain which we must return to the history of the previous day. On that Sunday morning when Catherine breathed her last, a certain devout matron of Rome, named Semia, who lived in the neighbourhood, and was much attached to the Saint, awoke, intending to rise and hear an early Mass, that she might return home in time to prepare dinner for her sons. Semia had not been to visit Catherine for several days, and so had not learned that her sickness had reached its last extremity. As she was preparing to rise from her bed, there appeared to her a child about the age of eight or ten years, who forbade her, saying, "Thou shalt not rise till thou hast seen what I have to show thee." Then taking her by her garments, he led her, as it seemed, to a large open place, where she saw an oratory, containing a fair tabernacle of silver, fast closed. The child bade her observe attentively what should happen, when lo! another child appeared with a golden key, who opened the tabernacle; whereupon there came forth a young and beautiful virgin, royally appareled in shining white, decked with jewels, and wearing on her head three crowns,—the first of silver; the second of silver mixed with gold, "showing a glistening red colour as when an orient red ground is wrought over with threads of gold;" the third of pure gold decked with precious

stones.[1] Looking steadily on her, Semia recognised the countenance of Catherine of Siena, but her age not agreeing, she did not believe it to be her. Whereupon the young virgin, looking at the children, said, smiling, "Lo! she knoweth me not!" Then four other children came, carrying a kind of rich seat, in which they placed her, desiring, as it seemed, to carry her away therein. But she said to them, "Suffer me first to go and speak to her who sees, but does not know me;" and coming nearer she said, "Semia, do you not know me? I am Catherine of Siena: mark well what you will now see." Then Semia beheld how the children lifted the seat, and bore it up to heaven, where was a throne set, and on it a King, royally clad, holding in His hand an open book. As soon as the children had borne her to His presence, Semia beheld the young virgin descend from her seat and prostrate at the King's feet to adore Him; Who said to her, "Welcome, My beloved Spouse and daughter Catherine!" Then there approached a Queen, accompanied by a shining train of virgins; and when the holy maid saw her, she knelt upon her knees, and did her reverence. And the Queen also embraced her, saying lovingly, "Welcome, my dear daughter Catherine!" After which she passed among the virgins, and they received her with passing great joy, kissing and saluting her one by one. On this Semia began to pray aloud, and doing so she awoke, and found she had indeed fallen asleep again at the moment when she was intending to rise, and that all she had seen had been a dream. It was late, moreover, and she was in doubt if she should be in time to hear Mass; so in some disturbance of mind she made hasty preparations in her kitchen, and then set forth to the church, saying to herself, "If I lose Mass this day, I shall take all I have seen to be the work of the enemy; but otherwise I shall think it has been shown me for Catherine's sake." On reaching the church she found the gospel was over, and, much distressed, began to fear that the wicked fiend had deceived her. However, hearing

[1] These three crowns would seem to represent those of Virgin, Martyr, and Doctor, to the merits of all which states Catherine may be said, in a certain sense, to lay claim.

a bell ring for Mass at a convent of nuns hard by, she hastened thither, and was in time to fulfil her obligation, which somewhat comforted her. As soon as Mass was over she hastened back, full of fear lest her sons should be home before her, and impatient for their dinner. They overtook her in the street, and begged her to let them have their dinner at once, as the hour was late. She unlocked the door and went straight to the kitchen, where, to her surprise, she found everything ready to be served. Full of wonder who could thus have come to her help, she was impatient that the meal should be over, that she might hasten to Catherine's house, and relate her dream. But when she came to the house she could make no one hear, though she knocked many times; for indeed all the inmates were at that moment absorbed in sorrow, the departure of their dear Mother having taken place shortly before; and they were still taking counsel how best to proceed in the matter of her burial. Semia, therefore, was forced to retire without seeing or speaking with any one; nor was it until the next day, that seeing the crowds hurrying towards the Minerva, and asking whither they were going, she learnt that Catherine had departed this life, and that her body had been carried to the church of the Friars. On this she also hastened to the church, and in a passion of grief reproached the Sisters for not having called her to be present at her dear Mother's last passage, inquiring at what hour she had breathed her last. Then she learned that Catherine had departed out of this life at the very hour when she had seen her so gloriously received into heaven, and relating the goodly vision which our Lord had shown her to the Sisters and others who stood about the bier, "they all gave glory to God, and took no small comfort."[1]

This narrative did not lessen the devotion of those who were present at Catherine's funeral; and during the whole of that and the following day the same extraordinary scenes continued. Many of the first preachers in Rome contended for the honour of celebrating from the pulpit the praises of the departed Saint; and among others, Master John the Third made an attempt to

[1] Abridged from Fen, Part 4, chap. ix.

deliver her panegyric in the church where she lay. But the tumult of the people coming and going, and their efforts to bring their sick and infirm near enough to touch the holy body, rendered it impossible for him to make himself heard. He contented himself therefore, with crying in a loud voice, "This holy virgin has no need of our preaching, she preaches sufficiently herself;" and so came down from the pulpit without saying another word. "It was truly a wonderful spectacle: the whole population of Rome came thither spontaneously," says Raymund, "to venerate the remains of the departed Saint, and recommend themselves to her prayers." Cardinals, prelates, nobles, and plebeians might be seen crowding round the bier, all speaking of her admirable life, trying to touch her body, or carry away portions of her garments. Many miraculous cures took place in the church; others followed after the body had been placed in the sepulchre prepared for it. During the two days and nights that elapsed before the interment, Stephen and his companions ceased not to watch by the beloved remains, and when at last the time came to deposit them in their last resting-place, it was Stephen who with his own hands laid the body in its coffin of cypress wood, reverently kissing it and watering it with his tears. He then closed the coffin, which was deposited in the cemetery of the religious, burial within the church being reserved for persons of the highest rank; but it was not actually buried in the earth, but placed in a sarcophagus somewhat elevated above the ground. The funeral obsequies, which were of great magnificence, were celebrated on the 2nd of May, at the expense of Pope Urban, who commanded all the clergy of Rome, whether secular or regular, to assist at the ceremony. A few days later another funeral service of equal solemnity was celebrated by order of John Cenci, Senator of Rome, as a token of gratitude from the citizens to her who had proved their most powerful protectress. Although it had been Stephen's intention to leave Rome immediately after the funeral, yet he continued to linger from day to day, unable as it seemed to separate from the spot where reposed her mortal remains. He occupied himself in collecting every

object she had ever used, and in writing accounts of her last moments to Raymund of Capua, to the Brethren of Our Lady at Siena, and to other pious persons; "which letters," says his biographer, "turned the mourning of those who read them into joy." Every night he watched for many hours by the tomb of the Saint; for this devotion was his only comfort, and he knew not how to give it up, though at the same time he felt moved to depart in order to fulfil her dying injunctions. However, he could not make up his mind to depart without some memorial of his beloved Mother. He debated in his mind whether he might not reopen the coffin and cut off some of her hair; or possess himself of a finger, or perhaps a hand. He remembered, however, what she had formerly predicted to Raymund as to the translation of her body, and prudently determined to wait till then, before taking any step of this kind. Nevertheless, after consulting with Alexia and the other Sisters, he reverently took a tooth, and gave one also to Alexia; Neri di Landoccio obtaining possession of a third. Raymund in his Legend relates the story of Cintio Tancancini, a young man of Rome, who was in the last extremity from quinsy, and whom Alexia cured by applying to his throat the tooth which had been given to her, and which she kept as her most precious treasure; and on one occasion when Raymund was speaking from the pulpit of the merits of the Saint, and relating this incident, Cintio himself stood up among the audience and attested the truth of the preacher's words. We shall not, however, dwell at any length on the miracles wrought at this time, or later, by the Saint's intercession. The reader will probably feel greater interest in hearing the manner in which the news of her death was communicated to some of her absent disciples. And first, we must speak of F. Raymund of Capua, who was just then preparing to leave Genoa for Pisa, on his way to Bologna, where the election of a new Master-General of the Order was about to be made. "The same morning that the blessed Catherine expired," he says, "I had gone to the church to celebrate the festival of St. Peter Martyr. After saying Mass, I again went up to the dormitory to prepare

my little bundle for our intended journey, when passing by the image of our blessed Lady, which stood in the dormitory, I said an Ave Maria softly, after the manner of our religious, and remained kneeling there for a few minutes. At that moment I heard a Voice, which was not in the air, pronouncing words which I perceived, not orally, but mentally: yet I was more distinctly conscious of than if I had listened to them with my bodily ears, as though it had been a voice, yet without a sound. This Voice spoke, or at least presented to my mind these words: 'Fear not, I am here for your sake; I am in heaven for you; I will protect and defend you: be tranquil; fear nothing, I am here *for you*.' At first these words threw me into great trouble, and I tried to think what they could mean. At the moment I could only attribute them to the blessed Virgin whom I was in the act of saluting; yet this I dared not think, because of my unworthiness. I feared some terrible calamity was at hand, and thought that perhaps as I had been invoking this good Mother of the afflicted, she had sent me this warning to prepare me for the coming event. For as I had been preaching at Genoa against the schismatics, I fancied some among them might be awaiting an opportunity to injure me. It was so I endeavoured to account for the prodigy which God had been pleased to work by the soul of His Spouse, in order to support my weakness."

Raymund was not the only person who, at the moment of Catherine's death, seems to have had an intimation of her blessedness. The reader will remember what had passed between her and Master Thomas Petra; and this worthy man gave his testimony of what happened to himself after her death, in a letter which is to be found in the second deposition of F. Bartholomew Dominic, forming part of the Process. The responsible position, no less than the grave and accurate character of the writer, must be borne in mind while reading his extraordinary narrative.

"Eight days had elapsed after the death of Catherine," he says, "when early one morning a man of great piety, called John of Pisa, came and knocked at my door. I opened it directly. 'Catherine of Siena is coming,' he said. 'How can that be?'

I asked, 'she has been dead more than a week.' 'Nevertheless,' he replied, 'you may be sure that you will see her,' and, so saying, he departed, before I could call him back. The morrow, and the next day, and so on for nearly thirty days, I received a similar visit from men estimable for their virtues and their saintly lives. I presume they were angels from God, who took the forms of these persons to announce to me what was to take place. At last, one Sunday, after having recited my Matins, I disposed myself to take a little repose, when, towards daybreak, I saw in a cloudless sky, a multitude of blessed spirits who advanced in regular procession; they were clothed in white, and marched three by three, bearing ornaments, relics, crosses, silver chandeliers, lighted tapers, and musical instruments; and they sung, in several choirs, sacred hymns, the *Kyrie Eleison*, the *Gloria in Excelsis*, the *Sanctus*, the *Benedictus*, and the *Te Deum*.

"The magnificence of this spectacle completely rapt me out of myself; nevertheless, remembering the promise that had been given me, I took courage, and said to one of the Angels, 'What are you doing?' He answered me, 'We are conducting the soul of Catherine of Siena into the presence of the Divine Majesty.' When he had passed on, with those who accompanied him, I addressed another, and said, 'Where is she?' Directly he heard me, the whole procession formed an extended circle, in the centre of which was Catherine: she was clad like the Angels, and resembled Our Lord, as He is painted in the tribune of churches. Her hands were filled with palm-branches, her head was inclined, and her eyes modestly cast down. I recognised her perfectly well by her exterior. I then asked Almighty God to complete the vision, and to comfort my soul by allowing me to behold Catherine's countenance. I was heard; she raised her head and looked at me *with that gracious smile which always expressed the joy of her soul.* The procession then resumed its onward march, continuing the heavenly chants."

What joy to those who beheld such spectacles! The world is at liberty to call them dreams, and we are not careful to claim for them any other title. But happy they who have such dreams;

who, when the beloved ones of their souls have gone from them, are privileged thus to behold them "in the visions of the night when deep sleep falleth upon man;" with the old "gracious smile" upon their lips, and a new and heavenly joy on their shining countenances. If such be the dreams that follow the parting stroke, who would not so dream on for ever! Another revelation appears to have been granted to John of the Cells, who speaks of it in the following beautiful letter, addressed to his former disciple Barduccio.

"My Son Barduccio,—How can we any longer live, now that our Mother, our only consolation, is gone from us! What is now left us save to weep over our unhappiness! And we shall not be alone in our tears; for now is accomplished the word spoken by the prophet of old, '*There shall be a great weeping in Jerusalem.*' For now are weeping in the Church of our loving Lord the company of monks by themselves, and the company of devout friars by themselves, and the widows by themselves, and the virgins of the Church by themselves, and those who are married, and penitents, and all whom Catherine gained to God, they all weep by themselves, and the poor and the miserable, they also weep by themselves.[1] And after them, I also weep, although the angels are celebrating a joyful festivity in heaven for her; yet, nevertheless, nothing is so sweet to me as to weep. I do not weep for her, for she desired death, and is living now in the presence of her Creator: neither do I weep out of any diffidence (as to her state), but I weep because I am an orphan and abandoned; because the joy of my heart has been taken from me; and therefore my eyes are blinded with my tears, and nothing brings me comfort, for there is no comfort to be had. *And if it were not, that even now she has appeared to me, and consoled me with her devout and angelic presence*, I should, to use the words of the Patriarch Jacob, 'weeping, have gone down into the grave.' By the grace of God, I have for thirty days celebrated for her the holy Sacrifice of salvation. Come then, beloved son, come to your old Father, come to your brethren, who expect you impatiently, in such sort that when you

[1] The allusion here is to Zach. ii. 12.

come they will receive you as no other than an angel of God. And recommend me to Brother Raymund, and salute all the children of Catherine in my name. Farewell, my son, and may the Lord show thee His will, that thou mayest at all times know what is acceptable to Him."[1]

One other letter yet remains to be quoted. It is that which Nigi di Doccio addressed to Neri, still absent in Naples, on the subject of their recent bereavement.

"*May* 22, 1380.

"DEAREST BROTHER,—I think you know how our dearest and most venerable Mother departed to Paradise on the 29th of April last. Praised be our blessed and crucified Saviour, Jesus Christ! I seem left an orphan, for all my comfort was in her, and now I cannot stop from weeping. I weep not for her, but for myself, who have lost my only good. I could not, as you know, have suffered a greater loss. Pray her to obtain from God that He send me some comfort. As to our Mother herself, I rejoice and am glad, in so far as she is concerned; but for us, her children, who remain in this miserable world, there is cause indeed to weep over and to pity them. I cannot pour out my grief to any one except yourself, who were the means of my first acquiring so great a blessing. I feel some comfort in this, that our sweet Mother remains incarnated in my heart more than ever she was, and I seem now to know her as I never knew her before. How miserable we were to have so much of her company, whilst yet we never knew her rightly, or were worthy of her presence! And I take comfort in this also, that she said, as you know, that she would be more useful to us dead than living. Know, dearest brother, that my sorrow will greatly diminish when I can once more be with you; remembering, as I said, that you were the means of my first possessing so great a treasure. But the more the thing which we possess is good and holy, the greater is our sorrow in losing it. Dearest brother, I am so distracted in mind by my loss that I am writing to you incoherently, and so I will

[1] *Lettere di Santi Fiorentini*. No. xxvii.

bring my letter to a close. I greatly fear the orphaned children will be like sheep that have lost their shepherd. Our Mother left the Bachelor and Master Matthew in her place. Sano di Maco will be Prior of the Company next June. I shall never forget you. Write and say when you are coming to Siena. Sano di Maco, and Sano di Bartolomeo, and all the other orphans remember themselves to you. Paoloccio has taken a wife. I, your servant Nigi Doccio, the orphan, salute you as well as I can."

Meanwhile the election of a new General of the Order of Friar Preachers was proceeding at Bologna, where on the Feast of Pentecost, according to Catherine's prediction, Raymund of Capua was nominated to the vacant office by the *Motu Proprio* of the Sovereign Pontiff. He made every effort to escape from so heavy and responsible a charge, but was at length constrained to accept it by obedience, as well as by the urgent solicitations of the Chapter. He determined in his mind that as soon as he should return to Rome he would cause the head of St. Catherine to be sent to the convent of St. Domenico at Siena, both as a token of affection to his brethren there, and also that this, the chief relic of her holy body, should repose in the city so dear to her in life, and which had been illustrated by so many of her most admirable actions. As soon therefore as he had entered on his office, and happily completed the visitation of the Ultramontane Provinces, he returned to Rome as would seem in the October of 1381; and once more took up his residence at the Minerva, where his first visit was to the sepulchre of her who, while she lived, had been at once his spiritual daughter and his Mother. He caused it to be opened, a thing easily done, as in point of fact it was not actually buried beneath the ground: and found that the clothes had suffered somewhat from the dampness of the place where the body was deposited, and where it was much exposed to the rain. He therefore resolved immediately to transfer the remains to a stone sarcophagus, and to deposit them in a safe place on the right hand side of the high altar of the church. When he had done this, he remembered, not without tears of tenderness, what Catherine had predicted to him on the eve of St. Francis, when they were

together at Voragine on their journey back from Avignon;[1] namely, that he should on that same day, in a future year, cause such a translation of her body to be made; a prediction which was thus fulfilled in every particular.[2] As to his further design of sending her head to Siena, he could not venture on so important a step without obtaining the consent of the Sovereign Pontiff. He therefore solicited the necessary permission from Urban, who willingly consented, charging him, moreover, to omit nothing that could make known to the world the merits and glory of the Saint. Having received this permission, he once more visited the sacred body, and first prostrating on the ground and asking her assistance, he then with generous resolution separated the head from the body, enclosed it in a reliquary of gilded copper, and consigned it to the care of two friars of the Order, of whom one was F. Thomas della Fonte, and the other was F. Ambrose di Luigi Sansedoni, both Sienese by birth. F. Ambrose was a man of great learning, and *Socius* to the General, who reposed the utmost confidence in him, and on that account selected him for this business. The two Fathers performed their journey with the utmost secrecy, and succeeded in depositing their precious charge in the convent at the Campo Reggio, without its being known by the people; and as the holy relic could not be exposed to public veneration before the canonisation of the Saint, it was laid up in a chest, and placed in the sacristy, where the intention was carefully to conceal and guard it until such time as the decision of the Church should authorise their rendering it befitting honours.

But it was not destined that the head of St. Catherine should long remain in this obscurity. A few years later, Raymund was ordered by his physician to repair to Siena for the purpose of recruiting his health in the medical baths of that vicinity. According to the Carthusian biographer of Stephen Maconi this visit

[1] See p. 7.

[2] The account which follows is abridged from the rare little memoir, entitled "*Breve Relazione del modo come fu portata da Roma a Siena la Sacra Testa di Santa Caterina* (Siena, 1683). It does not bear the name of its author, but Carapelli informs us it was the work of F. Tommaso Angiolini.

took place in 1384 or 1385.[1] Raymund was at that time engaged in compiling the life of the Saint, commonly known as the Legend; a work to which he devoted such intervals of leisure as he could secure in the midst of his heavy official duties. He took occasion of his visit to Siena to resume his labours on this book, and it was whilst thus occupied that his heart reproached him with having sent away from Rome the most noble of her relics in so secret a manner, and permitted it to have remained concealed so as to receive no signs of respect and veneration. He was aware that in Venice the custom had been at once established of celebrating the anniversary of her death, and causing her praises to be published from the pulpit; and reproaching himself for his own negligence, he resolved to repair it without loss of time, by taking measures that the sacred relic of her head should in future be treated with greater honour. He therefore took counsel with the Fathers of the convent, and with several of the Saint's most intimate friends who were still resident in Siena; among others with Master Matthew of the Misericordia, Neri di Landoccio, and Ser Christofano di Gano. Stephen Maconi, then a professed Carthusian living in the monastery of Pontignano, about five miles out of the city, received a supernatural intimation to join them, as they were assembled in consultation in the church of San Domenico; and it was through his influence that the consent of the bishop was obtained for the plans which they proposed and laid before him. It was agreed that Raymund should then present himself to the Consistory of the republic, and make known to them in what manner the head of their glorious fellow-countrywoman had been brought to the city, and hitherto preserved concealed. The Magistrates at once resolved that a grand public solemnity should be ordered, to be preceded by a week of spiritual exercises, during which time the most eminent preachers, whether

[1] Capecelatro, and some other writers, give 1385 as the date of Raymund's *first* translation of the body, in ignorance of the fact that this translation and the sending to Siena of the head of St. Catherine preceded by some years the public reception of the holy relic by the citizens, and the honours then rendered to it. F. Gregorio Lombardelli even assigns to this latter event so late a date as 1388.

natives or foreigners, should be invited to proclaim the glories of St. Catherine.

This part of the festival Raymund made it his business to arrange. On the evening of Saturday, the 23d of April, the bells announced the commencement of the great *predica*, which was opened next morning by Raymund himself. We shall not weary our readers with the list of all the preachers, but only notice the names of F. Bartholomew Dominic, F. Massimino of Salerno, F. Thomas Nacci Caffarini, F. John Piccolomini (son of the honest Gabriel), F. George of Naddi, whom the Saint had delivered from the thieves, and F. Bartholomew Montucci. On the following Sunday, May 1st (on which day was then kept what was called the "Solemnity" of the holy Virgin), the whole city flocked to San Domenico, and it was announced to them that on the following Thursday (May 5th) they should again repair to receive the head of their beloved fellow-citizen and protectress, Catherine Benincasa. Meanwhile, the fame of so many illustrious preachers who were collected in the city had drawn thither a great number of visitors from other parts. The Consistory moreover had written to all the bishops, abbots, and other prelates of the republic, inviting them to assist at the great procession which they had determined to celebrate on the following Thursday.

On the night, then, of the preceding Wednesday, Raymund took the relic with all possible privacy to the Hospital of St. Lazarus, outside the Porta Romana, where the procession was to begin, and where, says our historian, "St. Catherine was well known, and had worked many miracles." He placed it in a rich tabernacle, and prepared everything for the solemnity of the morrow. At dawn of day—A May day in the most delicious of Italian climates—the people, full of joyful devotion, came out into the streets, scattering flowers and sweet-smelling herbs, and burning perfumes in every place where the procession was to pass. When all was ready, the great bell of the Palazzo gave the signal from its lofty tower, and at that sound, as by magic, all the other bells of the churches rang out as by one consent, and continued doing so the whole time until the procession had reached its

destination. It would seem that the Porta Romana had been chosen as the gate by which the procession was to enter, in order that thus they might traverse the entire length of the city; so they set forth at last, chanting with a thousand voices, and making the air resound with so many musical instruments, "that," says Angiolini, "you would have thought the gates of Paradise had been thrown open." First came two hundred girls and as many boys, all selected of equal heights, dressed in white, and adorned with gold, silver, and jewels. They carried in their hands huge bunches of roses, lilies, and other flowers, "in memory," says F. Angiolini, "of Catherine's words; for she was accustomed to say that every one should wear white garments, and carry flowers in their hands; meaning thereby that they should be pure and innocent in life, and adorned with virtues." Then came representatives chosen for each one of the *Contrade* of the city, and of the different arts, bearing lighted torches. The various Companies and Confraternities, both of the city and of the country for five miles, in like manner sent their deputies; and each of these societies represented in a kind of *tableau vivant* in the procession some mystery of the Saint's life, the dresses being provided at the public expense; while before each Company was borne its own banner and a vast number of torches. Then followed all the Hermits of the Sienese States, of whom there were great numbers, all supported by the republic, to the end that they might with less distraction pray, meditate, and afflict their bodies; and before them was borne the Crucifix. Next came the different religious communities, each with their cross. Then the secular priests of the diocese, followed by the canons, all carrying wax candles. Then the gentlemen, magistrates and officials, two and two according to their rank, and clad in robes of office. Then the illustrious Consistory, in their richest dresses of state; after them the abbots and other dignitaries; followed by the bishops, in their pontificals, all with their pastoral staves in their hands. Last of all came a Baldachin of gold brocade adorned with jewels, borne over the sacred relic, which was carried in a magnificent tabernacle of gold, adorned with pictures of St. Catherine's life,

which had long before been prepared by Raymund. He himself, as Master-General of the Friar Preachers, walked on the left hand of the relic, while on the right appeared the Bishop of Siena.

It was a grand and solemn spectacle, but its most touching feature has yet to be described. Closely following the Baldachin came a long line of figures, walking two and two, clad in white robes and black mantles, on whom the eyes of all the citizens and of those who had come from distant parts rested with a peculiar interest. They were the Mantellate of St. Dominic, St. Catherine's own religious Sisters, many of them her chosen friends and companions in life. And their appearance recalled to every mind the days when she, too, clad in the same habit, went about those very streets on her missions of charity, ministering to the wants whether of soul or body, and diffusing around her the sweet perfume of her angelic presence.

And there, in the midst of them, assisting at this magnificent solemnity, wearing the habit of the Sisters of Penance, and walking in their ranks, appeared one venerable woman in extreme old age. *It was Lapa*, the mother of the Saint, who at eighty still survived to take part in the honours rendered to her beloved child. At the sight of her the beholders could not contain their tears, and many, breaking through the ranks of the procession, crowded round to look at and congratulate her, exclaiming, "O happy you, who with your own eyes have beheld the glorious triumph of your daughter!" The procession having at last reached the Church of St. Dominic, at the further extremity of the city, and the *Te Deum* having been sung, Raymund delivered a brief concourse; the Bishop bestowed his benediction on the people; and the sacred relic was deposited in a becoming chest made for the purpose, and placed in the sacristy. Stephen Maconi bore his part in this procession, "and for many days afterwards," says his biographer, "he could not cease from weeping, and speaking of his blessed Mother." On the same day that her head was deposited in the Church of St. Dominic, he himself received from Rome the finger on which had been placed the ring of her mystic espousals, and which had remained stiff and erect, whilst all the other fingers were

perfectly flexible. It was preserved at Pontignano with great veneration, and some years later Stephen received the cure of a malady of his eyes by touching them with this precious relic.

We do not know what the reader will think of the devotion of the Sienese, when we add that not content with the Octave of preparation they celebrated another "*predica*" of fifteen days, after the conclusion of the solemnity, and the names of the preachers of each day are faithfully given by F. Angiolini. One of them was F. Matthew Tolomei, the brother of Master James, and the same who had accompanied the Saint to Rocca dell' Orcia; another was F. Augustine of Pisa, who had been in the Church of St. Christina when Catherine received the stigmas; another was F. Gregory of Cescena, whose discourse was so magnificent as to stupefy his audience with admiration. But I shall pass over other more illustrious names of Fathers gathered from every convent of the Order in Tuscany, as well as from Venice, France, and Spain, and only add the consoling fact that among the distinguished foreign Dominicans who during that fortnight filled the pulpit of San Domenico, are to be found the names of F. Peter Martyr of Ireland, and F. John of England, the first of whom was "a great Doctor of Paris," and the second "a man greatly renowned as learned, holy, devout, exemplary, and full of faith."

It is thus that the true narrative of this celebrated procession is carefully given by F. Thomas Angiolini; and we have quoted it here, both because his little work is extremely rare, and because the facts have been related by other historians with many variations from the truth. The procession is very commonly represented as having been made by command of the Magistrates of Siena, in order to receive the relic when first sent from Rome by Raymund; ignoring the fact that its original transmission to Siena had been made privately, and at least five years previous to the public reception above described.

Probably no such honours were ever decreed to any other servant of God within so short a time of their decease, and prior to their canonisation. They were rather civic than religious honours, for these last could not, strictly speaking, be permitted,

according to the laws of the Church. It was the welcome which Siena gave to the greatest and the holiest of her citizens. And it was after this long day's festivity was over that the incident took place which Raymund has related in his Legend, though only accidentally, as it were, and in illustration of a totally different subject.

"It is now nearly five years ago,"[1] he says, "when I was in the city of Siena, where, at the earnest request of Catherine's spiritual children, I had commenced writing her life. It occurred to me at that time *that the head of the Saint, which had been brought from Rome to Siena, and which I had ornamented to the best of my ability, had not yet been publicly exposed and honoured.* I thought that a day might be selected *for a solemn reception of this precious relic in the convent, as though it had just arrived,* and that the religious might chant the Office of the day, as a particular one could not be allowed as long as the Sovereign Pontiff had not yet inscribed her in the catalogue of the Saints. The festival took place to the great satisfaction of the religious and the citizens, but especially of those persons of whom she had been the spiritual guide. I invited her most faithful disciples to dine in the refectory, and recommended the lay brother to give an extra attention to the serving of the repast.

"When the Office was concluded, and the moment for breakfast arrived, the Brother in charge of the pantry came to the Prior and told him with much distress that there was not sufficient bread for the Brethren at the first table, and none at all for the twenty invited guests. On this information, the Prior determined to ascertain the real situation of affairs, and having seen how it was, he immediately sent the steward, with Father Thomas (Catherine's first confessor), to several friends of the Order, to bring the bread required; but they delayed so long that the Prior

[1] This "five years ago" would be an admirable *point d'appui* for our chronology did we but know from what year we were to reckon back; but this Raymund has forgotten to mention. For the rest, his notice of the fact is valuable, and confirms the perfect accuracy of Angiolini's narrative. The words we have italicised show that the first sending of the head to Siena and its subsequent public reception happened at distinct times.

desired that the loaves which were in the house should be set before the strangers who were with me, so that a very small quantity remained in the storeroom. But as those on the quest did not return, he bade the religious sit down to table and begin on this small quantity until more should be brought. Then it was found that either in the storeroom, or on the refectory table, or somewhere, the bread had so multiplied through Catherine's intercession, that the whole Community were abundantly supplied, both at the first and second tables, and plentiful fragments left over; in fact, fifty religious had been fed with what would barely have sufficed for five. When the Brethren who had been sent out returned with what they had procured, they were told that it would serve for another time, because God had amply supplied the wants of His servants. After dinner I was speaking with our guests at some length on the virtues of the blessed Catherine, when the Prior came in with some others of the religious, and told us the miracle that had just taken place. Then I said to those present, 'It is clear that the holy Mother would not refuse to work for our benefit the same miracle she so often worked in her lifetime; the prodigy of to-day shows that she has accepted our service, and that she is ever with us; let us then give thanks to God and to our good Mother.'"[1]

Having said thus much concerning the first procession of the holy head of St. Catherine, it may be well to add a few words as to the subsequent history of this precious relic. In 1468 it was transferred to a magnificent silver reliquary, representing the head and bust of the Saint, one of the keys of the same being delivered to the keeping of the Captain of the people, and the other to the Prior of the Convent. On the night of the 3rd of December, in the year 1531, a terrible fire broke out in the Church of San Domenico, which destroyed many of the sacred relics and other treasures preserved in the church and sacristy; but St. Catherine's head was saved, thanks to the devotion of a certain Florentine lay brother, named Brother Anslem, who, wrapping himself in clothes dipped in water, threw himself into the midst of the flames, and

[1] Leg., Part 2, ch. xi.

rescued the relic, though not without its having sustained considerable injury. At the beginning of last century it was again transferred from this silver reliquary to one of crystal, in order the more easily to be seen and venerated by the faithful. Dating from the time of its solemn reception by the citizens, the annual custom of celebrating the festival of the Saint by a procession of her relics through the city has always been observed; though since its transfer to the crystal reliquary, the head itself has not been carried, but only the silver bust, in front of which is placed another relic, namely, the thumb of her right hand; "that hand," says Gigli, "which held the pen that wrote so many marvels." This annual procession still forms the great *Festa* of Siena, in which not the clergy alone, but all the magistrates, nobles, and citizens take part. The streets are then adorned with tapestry and flowers, the Church of San Domenico and the little cell of the Fullonica blaze with lights, and are visited all day long by pious pilgrims; and at night the whole Contrada of Fontebranda is brilliantly illuminated, and resounds with hymns and pious songs which recall the life of her whose glory still sheds its radiance over her native city.[1]

We must not conclude this chapter without adding a few particulars concerning the other chief relics of St. Catherine. When Raymund removed her body from the cemetery to the Church of the Minerva, he placed it at the foot of a column facing the Rosary Chapel, where it remained until 1430. In that year St. Antominus (afterwards Archbishop of Florence) was Prior of the Minerva, and by his orders the body was placed in a new stone sarcophagus, richly carved and surmounted by a wooden statue of the Saint. The head of the figure rests on a pillow, on which are engraved the words, *Beata Katerina;* while on the sarcophagus itself appears the following inscription: SANCTA CATERINA VIRGO

[1] The head of St. Catherine is kept in the chapel dedicated to her in the Church of S. Domenico. An exact account of its present state will be found given in the Scientific Report quoted by Niccolo Tommaseo in the first vol. of his edition of St. Catherine's letters (Appendix XI.), in which the writer declares that in spite of the injuries of time, the countenance even yet retains an expression of "vigour and agreeable candour."

DE SENIS ORDINIS S. DOMINICI DE PÆNITENTIA. This sarcophagus has often been opened, and relics taken from it have been distributed among various churches and convents. Thus in 1487, F. Joachim Toriani, General of the Order, gave the right hand to the nuns of S. Domenico e Sisto, and at the same time sent a foot to the Church of SS. John and Paul, at Venice. In 1575, F. Sixtus Fabbri gave another large relic to the nuns of Santa Caterina of Rome, whose community descends from the disciples of the Saint. On the 17th of April, 1855, when the Church of the Minerva was undergoing restoration, the sarcophagus was again opened by F. Alexander Vincent Jandel, General of the Order, in presence of many ecclesiastics of high rank. On that occasion a considerable portion of the sacred relics was taken out by the General, and sent to the convent of St. Dominic's, Stone, the Mother-House of the English congregation of Sisters of Penance, which bears the name of St. Catherine. These relics, which fill two silver and crystal reliquaries each three and a half inches long, consist of portions of bone and skin presenting the appearance of grey ashes, among which appear mingled threads of gold, the remains, probably, of the cloth of gold in which the holy body was wrapped. One of these reliquaries is preserved at St. Dominic's, Stone; the other at the convent of St. Catherine, at Bow, near London.

The Church of the Minerva was reopened after its restoration on the 3rd of August 1855. The relics of the Saint, still reposing in their ancient sarcophagus, were then deposited beneath the high altar which, on the day following, being the Feast of St. Dominic, was solemnly consecrated by Pope Pius IX., of holy and happy memory. The next day the shrine was visited by the Roman Senate, and the relics were borne through the neighbouring streets in a grand and solemn procession. On this occasion, as before at Siena, appeared the unusual feature of a number of Sisters of the Third Order, following the crowd of prelates and illustrious personages who were assembled to do honour to their great patroness. This is the event celebrated as the Translation of St. Catherine, which was decreed to be thenceforward observed

as a *Totum Duplex* on the Thursday before Sexagesima Sunday, on which day had, until then, been kept the Commemoration, or Espousals of the Saint; and a Proper Office of nine lessons was granted to the Order to be on that day recited. A few years later Pius IX. adorned the tomb of the Saint with some precious jewels, in consequence of which it has been thought necessary to enclose the sarcophagus in a kind of lattice-work, yet so as still to leave it visible under the high altar.

We have already spoken of the right hand of St. Catherine which is preserved in the convent of San Domenico e Sisto; other relics of a different kind are, or were, preserved in various places. Gigli tells us that at Rome, in his time, a portion of her habit was to be seen at St. Niccolo in Carcere; a discipline and chain were at St. Cecilia in Trastevere; and a shoe of white leather at Santa Maddalena. This last-named convent is on the Pincian Hill, and was founded in 1582 by Sister Magdalen Orsini; but during the Pontificate of Gregory XVI., the Community, which was of strict observance, was broken up, and its members incorporated with those of Santa Caterina and another Dominican Community; the convent being assigned to the nuns of the Perpetual Adoration. The shoe mentioned by Gigli is probably, therefore, the same now in the possession of the nuns of Santa Caterina, who also have a crucifix said to have belonged to the Saint.

It is at Siena, however, that the greatest number of her memorials have been preserved, among which must be numbered the holy house of the Fullonica, which was her birthplace and home. It was purchased by the Signoria in 1464, and transformed into a devout oratory at the petition of the inhabitants of the Contrada di Fontebranda who were too poor to undertake the expense themselves. At that time we read of "the great number of foreigners who came thither on pilgrimage, devoutly kissing the stairs and floors, saying as they did so, 'Here lived the true Spouse of Christ,' and other similar words." The oratory when finished was given into the custody of the Confraternity of St. Catherine in Fontebranda. The house has happily been pre-

served in all its chief features unaltered, and the visitor may still see the workshop of Giacomo and the cellar where the wine was multiplied; the staircase which Catherine so often ascended as a child, reciting a Hail Mary on every step; the fireplace where she prepared the family meals; the room she occupied with her brother Stephen, and that which afterwards served as her chapel, and in which Mass was celebrated after her return from Avignon. The altar still remains, and on it are reliquaries containing various objects used by her in her lifetime; such as the lantern she carried when summoned to the sick during the hours of the night; a phial of scent, given to her, probably, at the time of the plague; and a stick on which she leaned when infirm. But by far the most interesting spot is the cell which was assigned to her own use, lighted by its little window, beneath which appear the remains of the brick steps on which she occasionally rested her head during her scanty hours of repose:[1] the walls and floors of this room remain unaltered, and the pilgrim may still kiss the ground where her feet once trod. The Church of Sta. Caterina occupies the site of the former garden; and here is preserved the Crucifix brought from Pisa, before which she received the stigmata. From the top of her father's house Catherine could behold the neighbouring church of San Domenico, and here she is said by tradition to have been in the habit of resorting, as to a place of prayer and contemplation. Of the church itself we have already spoken. As at Sta. Caterina, the walls are everywhere adorned with paintings and sculptures representing the chief scenes of Catherine's life, executed by the best Sienese artists. Of these the most celebrated is the Swoon of the Saint, who appears supported in the arms of two of her Sisters. This painting, which is in the chapel of St. Catherine, is by Giovanni Antonio Razzi, of Verzelli, more commonly known as Sodoma, and is regarded as his masterpiece. Its grace and loveliness are beyond dispute, yet, as is so often to be remarked, the conception of the artist fails as a representation of the actual fact; for this picture in no way corresponds with what we know to have been Catherine's real condition when

[1] Portions of these are preserved in St. Dominic's Convent, Stone.

in ecstasy. On the pavement of the church appear various inscriptions, placed there by F. Angiolo Carapelli, when sacristan, in order to show the exact spots where certain events in Catherine's life took place. Here, we read, her heart was exchanged for that of her Divine Spouse—there, she bestowed the silver cross upon the beggar; in another place she gave her garment to Christ under the form of a poor pilgrim; whilst another inscription marks the place where He was wont to recite with her the Psalms of the Divine Office.

Catherine's memory, then, still survives in the heart of her countrymen; and the events of her marvellous life form part of the classic history of Siena. Much might be said of the tributes which have been paid to the beauty of that life by literature and by art, but we purposely abstain from all such digressions as would present the reader with a mere human idealism of one of God's Saints. It is not with them as with the great ones of this world, whose histories may be woven into poems and dramas, and made the theme of fanciful conceptions. For, "the just are living for evermore." We cannot altogether relegate them to the past, and regard them through the dim medium of intervening centuries, as we regard many a hero and heroine whose historic existence is almost swallowed up in that with which they have been invested by the imagination. It is not to art or to poetry that the memory of the Saints owes its amazing and fructifying power, but to the fact that we hold with them a living intercommunion. In this sense St. Catherine lives as truly now as in the days of her mortal pilgrimage; nay, rather, endowed with a newer and more abundant life; and thousands of hearts at this moment turn to her as to a living Mother. In her own Order she has for five centuries held a position altogether exceptional, the undisputed model on which has been formed a countless progeny of Saints. Far from representing the ideas of a dead and obsolete past, her example and her words are as fresh and vigorous in this nineteenth century as they were in the fourteenth. As a living Mother, then, we will invoke her, and implore her, from her home in the highest heavens, where she joyfully reposes

with her Eternal Spouse, that she will look down on the troubles and sorrows of us, her children, and assist us before God with her loving prayers! *De excelso cœlorum habitaculo, in quo in jucunditate accumbis cum Sponso tuo, intuere, piisima Virgo, angustias et tribulationem generis tui, et subveni ante conspectum Dei nostri* (Off. Trans. S. Cath. Resp. ix.).

CHAPTER X

The Devotions of St. Catherine

IT would be quite beyond the design proposed in these pages to attempt, at the close of St. Catherine's history, anything like a formal analysis of her character or spirit. If she has not already herself revealed them, no comment from the pen of another would help to make her better known. Yet before quite parting with the glorious Saint, whose history has so long engaged us, it may be well to cast one retrospective glance on the path we have been following. In relating her story it has been the aim of the writer, as far as possible, to make St. Catherine her own biographer, specially when we have been required to study the inner movements of her heart. Few Saints have left behind them more ample materials for such a study than we possess in the works and letters of St. Catherine. They unveil her soul, as far as any soul can be unveiled to human eyes; and it is in this, more even than in the example of her great actions, that the value of her life consists. For her actions were, for the most part, on too colossal a scale for imitation; we cannot even understand them aright without an interpreter; and their interpretation must be sought from a knowledge of the interior spirit, of which they were but the outer shell. Incidentally, as the narrative of her life has proceeded, the quotations from her letters and the records of her spoken words will, from time to time, have lifted portions of the veil; but some may desire more than such accidental glimpses of what lay behind it, or at any rate to be able to place such revelations before them in a coherent form. To do this may involve something of recapitulation, for which the patience of the reader is

solicited; but it will also set before him some points which have of necessity been but briefly touched on in the course of our history.

There is perhaps no better way of reaching the end we have in view than by considering for a few moments the subject of *St. Catherine's Devotions.* Devotion is the blossom of Faith. Blossoms, as we all know, are of little value without fruit; but besides the obvious fact that they have a good deal to do with the production of fruit, they have another use, which is, that by their examination and dissection we recognise the tree from which they spring. We know what *style* is to an author or an artist; a something that betrays the irresistible, perhaps unconscious, tendency of his mind. It appears in certain words or locutions which perpetually recur on the written page; or certain forms—a subdued or splendid colouring, a grace of line, or a power of conception, which is always reappearing on the canvas, not only revealing to us the artist, but also giving us a key to the hidden emotions of his soul. And just what style is in art or literature, devotions are in the spiritual life. They mark the specialities of the souls in whom they appear, those specialities which make up the spiritual character. For, far from being all alike, we observe among the Saints that endless variety which (as St. Catherine has told us) so wonderfully increases the beauty of God's Paradise. And thus, when studying the character of any Saint, we require to know their special devotions, and to see them arranged in such an order as may show us their connection and coherence.

St. Catherine received from her Creator many great and glorious gifts, but, beyond all question, the most glorious of all was that which has been so often spoken of as "the Perfection of Faith." From the very dawn of her spiritual life she fixed the eye of her understanding on the great truths of Creation and Redemption, and fed her soul with the Eternal Verities of the Catholic Creed. One God in Three Persons; God the Son made Man for us, shedding His Precious Blood for our Redemption, and pouring It out over our souls through the Sacraments of Holy Church; these were the Verities which became to her the only realities in the world. They are the same truths which every child in every

Catholic poor school believes and professes; but there is a difference between believing and professing them, as the common herd of men are used to do, and going down into their depths, exploring, tasting, and living upon them as Catherine did, until all else faded from her spiritual vision, and she became enamoured of the Truths of Faith. As the beauty of Faith grew upon her, she desired with increasing ardour to possess it more perfectly, and the gift of this Faith in its fullest measure was the foundation-stone of her sanctification. Thus the spiritual eye of her understanding became so illuminated that what others beheld in a dark manner, she gazed at almost without a veil; at any rate, the veil was so thin as not to impede her sight, and the spiritual world became far more real to her apprehension than the material and tangible world that surrounded her.

Among the Truths of Faith which she thus lovingly contemplated, the prime and principal one was God Himself. It has already been noticed how like her words are to those of the Catechism in speaking of the end of our creation: the same may be said of the expressions she uses regarding the Unity and Trinity of God. Her devotion to the Holy Trinity and her habitual contemplation of It appears on every page of her writings, which display her to us with the eye of her intellect fixed on that most Divine and exalted of all Mysteries, plunging into its depths, and delighting in its fathomless infinitude. "O Eternal Trinity!" she exclaims, "O Deity, Whose Divine nature gives the price to the Precious Blood of Thy Son! Thou, Eternal Trinity, art the fathomless sea into which the deeper we enter, the more we find; and the more we find, the more we seek. In that abyss the soul satiates herself, and is never satisfied; but ever hungers and thirsts after Thee, the Eternal Trinity, even as the hart pants after the fountains of living water."[1] This, her habitual devotion, nowhere finds fuller expression than in her prayers, which are but a few specimens accidentally preserved of her daily communings with God. In these prayers she sometimes begins by invoking the "Eternal

[1] Dial., ch. clxvii.

Trinity, one God in three Persons" (23); sometimes she goes on to address each Person separately, distinguishing them with admirable precision; or she occupies herself with the attributes which she beholds in the Most Holy Trinity, and applies them to her own spiritual wants, asking light from Its Light, wisdom from Its Wisdom, and strength from Its Force (Prayer 24). Sometimes she contemplates the same mystery in another way, as displaying the love of God for man: as when she calls the adorable Trinity "our table, our food, and our servant." "For Thou, O Father, art the Table whereon is served to us the unspotted Lamb, Thy only Son; and this Lamb is Himself our sweet and delicious food; and the Holy Ghost has made Himself our servant, serving to us the doctrine that enlightens our understanding and attracts our heart" (*Ibid.*). And Caffarini tells us that when offering any special prayers for the souls of others, it was her custom to recommend them to each Person of the Holy Trinity.

She realised with astonishing precision, and dwelt on the thought with ever-increasing wonder and delight, that in the three powers of the reasonable soul there is impressed the image of the Most Holy Trinity. To her this was the most suggestive of all truths; and she drew from it a profound sense of the dignity of the human soul. "O Eternal Father!" she exclaims,[1] "Thou hast drawn man out of Thy holy thought, like a flower wherein are distinguished the three powers of the soul; and in each of these powers Thou hast placed a germ, that they may fructify in Thy garden and yield back to Thee the fruit which Thou hast bestowed. Thou hast given him *memory*, that he may retain the thought of Thy benefits; and *understanding*, that he may know Thy Truth and Thy will, which is his sanctification; and Thou hast given him *will*, that he may love that which his understanding perceives, and his memory retains." In her Dialogue she expresses the same truth even more precisely. After saying that it was uncreated charity which moved God to create man in His own image, she continues: "And this Thou

[1] Prayer 21.

didst, O Eternal Trinity, desiring that man should participate in Thee altogether. Therefore, Thou gavest him memory, that he might participate in the power of the Father; and understanding, that he might participate in the wisdom of the Son; and will, that he might participate in the clemency of the Holy Spirit."[1] Thus she passed from God to the creature, and from the creature back to God, whom she habitually recognised as the End and Object[2] of the creature, the only cause and explanation of how it came to be. Without God man is nothing, for God is He Who is, and the creature, of itself, is nothing. Out of this thought flowed the fountain of her humility. She marvelled that the creature, knowing itself to be a creature, should be capable of vainglory;[3] for as she expresses it in the Dialogue, "As soon as a soul knows itself, it has found humility."[4] Yet this same thought of God, as the one Object of the soul, taught her likewise to understand the soul's true greatness and dignity. If God were the Object for which man was created, nothing less than God could ever satisfy him: man's soul, having in it an appetite and capacity for the infinite, can never be appeased with finite things, which are all less and lower than himself. "For man," she says, "is placed above all other created things, and therefore he cannot rest or be satisfied save in something greater than himself. But there is nothing greater than man save God; and therefore it is that God alone can satisfy him."[5] Hence, too, she understood the intolerable blindness and folly of pride. "It is impossible for us," she says, "even to comprehend the senseless ignorance of man when he trusts in himself and confides in his own wisdom. O foolish one! seest thou not that the wisdom that thou hast, thou hast from none save God!"[6]

[1] Dial., ch. xiii.

[2] In her first prayer she calls God *il proprio Obietto dell' anima;* and the same expression is to be found in many parts of the Dialogue, as well as in her last letter to Raymund. It is unnecessary to point out the deep significance of such an expression, which summarises in a single word the relations between God and man.

[3] P. 260.

[4] Dial., ch. vii.

[5] Ibid., ch. xciii.

[6] Ibid. ch. cxl.

These truths, so simple, but so profound, she made the principles of her spiritual philosophy, and applied them in the guidance of souls.

St. Catherine, then, saw in God the Beginning and the End of man; but between them yawned a vast abyss. Across that abyss there had once been a road, but it had been broken and ruined by the sin of Adam. To enable man once more to reach God, the Eternal Son of God took our nature upon Him and became THE BRIDGE. This thought forms the text of her Dialogue. "To enable you to enjoy eternal life and to reach your end, MY SON HAS MADE HIMSELF A BRIDGE." She understood that this was affected by the Incarnation. "For the greatness of the Divinity abased itself to the earth of your humanity, and by this union the Bridge was made, and the road repaired."[1] The amazing charity of God towards His creatures became in a manner sensible to her under this image. "My charity has been made visible in the person of My Son, Who has shown it to you by shedding His Blood for you. And this Blood nourishes you in the Sacraments. It is My Vicar who holds the key of the Blood, and who is charged to distribute It to you. You will find It in the hostelry which is established on the bridge, to feed the pilgrims who pass thereby."[2]

The abyss between God and man bridged over by the Word made Flesh; we, the pilgrims between earth and heaven, only able to reach our end—the God for whom we were created—by passing over that Bridge; but unable to pass, and fainting by the way without the Food that must sustain us on our journey; that Food, the precious Blood of Christ; and that Blood applied to our souls by the Sacraments, and dispensed to us on earth by him who holds the key,—here are the sensible figures under which St. Catherine beheld the grand mysteries of the Catholic Faith: and here were the links of that wonderful chain which united together in her luminous devotion the Eternal God in Three Persons; the Word made Flesh, and so becoming the Bridge between earth and heaven; His Blood, the Price of our Redemp-

[1] Dial., ch. xxii. [2] Ibid., chaps. xx., xxii., xlvi.

tion, and the Food of our souls; the Sacraments, Its channels; the Church, Its Tabernacle or Hostelry; and the Vicar of Christ and the priests of Holy Church, those who hold the key to unlock that Tabernacle, and who pour its priceless Treasure on our souls.

When, therefore, after naming the Most Holy Trinity, we say that St. Catherine's devotions of predilection were to all the mysteries of the Incarnation, but specially to the most Precious Blood as to the sum of them all, our meaning will be clear. It was the closely reasoned connection between all these adorable mysteries "cemented together as stones by the Precious Blood," which inspired her with her habitual ejaculation, "O Fire! O Blood!" and made those words to be, in fact, a brief and energetic profession of loving faith in all the articles of the Christian Creed; so that, even at the moment when she passed out of this life, the same accents still lingered on her lips, and she died murmuring the words, "Blood! Blood!" St. Catherine's devotion to the Precious Blood was not exclusively expressed in the phraseology of her writings and her prayers. Her frequent and fervent use of the Sacraments was an inherent part of this devotion. "She was as one famished for the Blood of Christ," says Caffarini, "ever seeking to be washed in It afresh." Her marked solicitude to procure from the Sovereign Pontiff privileges and indulgences for herself and others had the same origin. In one such Brief which she obtained from Gregory XI., an indulgence at the hour of death is granted to seventy-seven of her friends and disciples by name. On her deathbed, having received the indulgence granted her by Gregory, she was not satisfied until she had also received that of Urban. And, as we have seen, the disciple who wrote the account of her last moments comments on her continual request for absolution, saying, that "it was as though she desired that more and more of the Blood of Christ should be poured over her."[1] These things were evidences of

[1] In one of her prayers (9) St. Catherine uses the expession, "The eternal Blood," which has been criticised by some as incorrect. She herself, however, adds her own explanation: "I call it Eternal, because it is united to the

that faith which filled her soul, and enable us faintly to realise the light in which she regarded the Sacraments and ordinances in Holy Church.

But further than this, it was the vivid comprehension she had of the dogmas of Creation and Redemption which was the origin of her immense love of souls. It is probably by her zeal for the conversion of sinners and the salvation of souls that St. Catherine is chiefly remembered. This sacred passion for souls sprang from the keen insight she had into the love which God bears them. In her Dialogue she represents the Eternal Father, after disclosing and explaining to her the mysteries of the Incarnation, as figured by the mystic Bridge, declaring to her that all she beheld had been the work of Love, and with amazing condescension soliciting her to pray for the souls He longed to save.[1] He made her understand that He chooses men to be His fellow-labourers, to take part in the great work of the salvation of the world; and that He asks and desires them by their prayers to move Him to show mercy to sinners. And then it was that in a rapture of love she exclaimed, "O Abyss of Charity! who can resist Thee! for Thou seemest to love Thy creatures even to folly, as though Thou couldst not live without them! . . . In mercy Thou didst first create them; in mercy Thou didst redeem them; in mercy Thou hast washed them in the Blood of Thy Son; in mercy Thou still desirest to converse with them. O folly of Love! it was not enough for Thy Son to become man, but He would even die for man. . . . We are the creatures whom Thou hast made, and I behold in our redemption in the Blood of Thy Son, that Thou art verily enamoured of the beauty of Thine own creature!"[2] In one passage of her Dialogue we have an intimation that the subject that drew from her the celebrated exclamation, *Vidi Arcana Dei!* was none other than the stupendous

Divine Nature;" and her commentators refer us to the words of St. Paul, *Per proprium sanguinem introivit semel in sancta, æterna redemptione inventa"* (Heb. ix. 12). And, again, to the passage in the Apocalypse, where we read, "*Agnus qui occisus est ab origine mundi*" (Apoc. xiii. 8).

[1] Dial., ch. xxix.

[2] Ibid., chaps. xxv., xxx., clxvii.

love of God for His creatures. "O Eternal, Infinite Good!" she exclaims, "O folly of Love! Dost Thou stand in need of Thy creature? It surely seems as though Thou couldst not live without him. He flies from Thee, and Thou followest after him, seeking him. He keeps away from Thee, and Thou drawest near. Nearer to him Thou couldst not come than to clothe Thyself with his humanity. I could say with St. Paul, 'The tongue cannot speak, nor the ear hear, nor the eye behold, nor the heart conceive that which I have seen.' What hast thou seen? *Vidi Arcana Dei!*"[1]

It was by the light of this revelation which she had received of the love which God bears His creatures, that St. Catherine came to contemplate souls; to measure their worth, and to appreciate that sin which alone can separate them from Him. We know that it was her intense realisation of God's love to man which broke her heart, and was the cause of her mystic death. When she returned from death to life, she found herself possessed and inebriated with two absorbing passions; the love of souls, and the hatred of sin; and henceforth her life became a long crusade undertaken to deliver the creatures so dear to God from the tyranny of His enemy.

God having been pleased to "elect her to be a labourer in the spiritual vineyard of the Church," communicated to her a special light for the guidance of souls. That exquisite purity of conscience which made sensible to her the least defect in her own conduct, enabled her to implant in the souls whom she trained in perfection a like horror of even the shadow of sin. With wonderful skill she used that insight which she possessed into the hearts of others, not merely to discover to them their hidden sins, but also to trace these sins to their fountain-heads, assuring her disciples that if they would be delivered from their habitual faults they must have patience to seek out, and courage to eradicate, the hidden root of self-love from which they sprang. Thus we read, that Sister Francesco di Marco, one of the Mantellate, came to her one day, complaining that her soul was full of uneasiness and

[1] Dial., ch. cliii.

obscurity, which she felt, without being able to explain. But Catherine told her that very often the smallest spark of an unmortified passion (*una piccola scintilla di passioncella*), if not promptly cast out of our hearts, may kindle within us a great fire which we cannot extinguish when we wish to do so; and made known to her the precise imperfection which she had unconsciously been cherishing, and to which her present sufferings were to be attributed.[1]

We have quoted this passage both for the sake of its intrinsic value, and also because it affords a proof that Catherine did not merely occupy herself with reclaiming great sinners, and rescuing them when on the verge of destruction. It is true that the stories which appear in her life, most often exhibit her to us engaged in this kind of work; but her power was no less wonderful in leading souls to perfection. A manual of spiritual direction might be compiled out of her letters, the key-note to which would certainly be *fidelity to conscience, based on the love of God.*

St. Catherine's devotion to the Holy Eucharist, which may be said to have filled up so large a part of her daily existence, rested on precisely the same foundation. The Holy Eucharist is the extension of the Incarnation; and the clear perception with which her faith beheld "God the Son made man for us, truly present under the appearances of bread and wine," is the explanation of those long ecstasies, and all those other wonders of her Communions, which fill the pages of the Legend. But on this subject we have already sufficiently spoken in a former chapter; fully to illustrate it would be simply to rewrite her life.

One so devout to the Incarnation, so penetrated with a faith in the dogma, and a comprehension of all its bearings, could not but be a loving child of Mary. Accordingly we find St. Catherine addressing the Blessed Virgin as "The temple of the Holy Trinity," "The source of our peace," "The Mother of Mercy who has borne the fruit of life," "She who may be said to have saved the human race, inasmuch as she gave to Christ the flesh in which He redeemed us," "who (in a sense) redeemed us by her sorrowful

[1] Sup., Part 2, Trat. 5, § 10.

Compassion, whilst her Son was (actually) redeeming us by His Bloody passion," "The new tree which gives us the Fruit of Life," "The car of fire, preserving the Fire hidden under the ashes of our humanity," "She who drew the Divinity to descend upon her by the gentle force of her humility," "The book in which is written our rule," "She in whom is revealed the dignity, the force, and the liberty of man." For "the Almighty Himself knocked at the door of your will, O Mary, and if you had not opened to Him, He would not have taken on Him our nature." Finally, she says that "he who has recourse to Mary with love and respect will never become the prey of the infernal wolf;" and again, "O Mary, I address myself to thee with boldness, because I know that God can refuse thee nothing."[1] We shall scarcely find language more fervid or more tender than this; and from the moment when Catherine, as a little child, commended herself to Our Lady on each step of the staircase in her father's house, up to that Feast of the Annunciation, 1379, the very year before her death, when she wrote the prayer from which most of the above epithets have been extracted, her devotion to the Mother of God was of the same character, based on the same solid foundation of faith which inspired all her other devotions, and expressed in the same sweet and natural language.

It is almost needless to indicate St. Catherine's devotion to the

[1] The above extracts are almost all taken from St. Catherine's 11th prayer. Mgr. Rafaelle Maria Filamondo, in the learned "Considerations" on some of the expressions used in these prayers (printed in Gigli's 4th volume), examines and explains the sense in which she speaks of Our Lady as redeeming the world by her Compassion, and gives parallel passages from the Fathers. In some editions of her works a conclusion appears to her 14th prayer, containing expressions which contradict the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The authenticity of the passage, however, has long since been disproved. It is admitted to be a literary forgery, and one not very creditable to its authors. The whole question has been critically examined by F. Hyppolito Marraccio, in his work entitled *Vindicatio S. Catherinæ Senensis a commentitia revelatione eidem S. Catharinæ adscripta contra Im. Conceptionem B. V. Mariæ.* (*Puteoli:* 1663). It would have been strange indeed if St. Catherine had given utterance to any expressions disparaging to a doctrine of which the Sienese were ever the most ardent defenders (See *Diario San.*, 2, 29, 520).

Church, as springing from the same root. The Church is to her always the body of Chirst. It is Christ Himself: *è esso Christo.* Those who do not realise this truth with equal clearness are naturally startled by the severity of her expressions in speaking of the enemies of the Church. Even the Abbé Fleury is shocked at her calling the schismatics "incarnate devils;" yet, as has been before observed, the language was rigorously logical. If the Church be Christ Himself, the would-be dividers and destroyers of the Church are *His* enemies, and aim at His destruction; and therefore she saw in them the likeness of the great enemy. Moreover, she had an eye to the ruin of souls, and those who caused that ruin she justly considered to be doing the work of demons.

St. Catherine's devotion to the Holy Church, the unspotted Spouse of Christ, is all the more apparent from the circumstance that at the time in which she lived, to use her own expression—repeated, and possibly even quoted by the English King—"her face had become pale." Scandals were seldom darker, sanctity in the ministers of the Church never more rare. The two Pontiffs, to whose cause she devoted herself with such unflinching loyalty, were both of them men of good-will and blameless lives; but they were not without defects, and precisely such defects as ordinary minds observe and contemn; and which, in such minds, diminish respect, and test the reality of faith. In this, so far as Catherine was concerned, there was a peculiar Providence. Had St. Gregory the Great or St. Pius V. sat on the chair of St. Peter instead of Gregory XI. and Urban VI., it might have been thought that some of St. Catherine's impassioned loyalty was directed to the individual man. We may safely say, however, that her conduct in that respect would have been entirely the same had the occupant of the Holy See been even less distinguished by personal qualities than those we have named. She beheld in him nothing but the Vicar of Christ. Exactly as she saw Christ in the poor pilgrim whom she clothed, did she behold Him in the persons of the Pontiffs whom she served; so too in their inferior ministers. She had not the happiness of living in times when she might

have seen the Episcopal thrones of Christendom filled by a St. Antoninus, a St. Charles, or a Bartholomew of the Martyrs; among the priests who ministered to the souls around her, she found neither a St. Vincent of Paul, nor an Olier, nor a Curé of Ars. In men like these, it would have required no extraordinary faith to recognise the "Ministers of the Blood." But St. Catherine lived in a sorrowful age, surrounded by scandals that would have tried a weaker faith, and to which, beyond all doubt, must in part be attributed the budding germ of that disaffection which two centuries later ripened in revolt. All the heresiarchs of that time began by taking scandal. There was plenty to cause it, and woe be to those by whom the scandals came! But while St. Catherine felt those scandals to the centre and marrow of her soul, so that they formed a part of that long anguish which was her life's martyrdom, they never dimmed her faith. This is much too weak an expression. They in a certain sense brought it into more dazzling light. "Let a man so account of us as the Ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God," says the apostle, and he adds: "Now it is required of dispensers that they be found faithful." It needed an eye illuminated by the Light of Faith to discern the Ministers of God in those so masked by human corruption as were some of those with whom St. Catherine had to do. Did she ever waver on this point, or rather, is not the very severity of her language the proof of her faith? for it was because they were "unworthy Ministers" of the Blood of Christ, that she so wrote and spoke. Hence her ardent longings for *reform*, though one need scarcely remark that a reform which struck at the very foundations of Faith could never have been welcomed by St. Catherine. Nevertheless, the peculiar magic which that word exercises over certain minds, and the fact that she not only *desired*, but even *predicted* its advent, has led some, who identify the word exclusively with the work effected by Luther and other sectaries, to claim St. Catherine as a morning star of the Protestant Reformation. That event (may we say it) must have been sadly in want of morning stars, if its votaries could find none better suited to the purpose than the Saint who,

had she lived to witness the revolt of the sixteenth century, would certainly not have bestowed on its adherents a gentler name than she applied to the schismatics of the fourteenth. Such audacious suppositions could never have been put forth by any one familiar with her works. No doubt the word *reformation* occurs in them sufficiently often; her meaning in using it she has explained clearly enough, when she repeats again and again that "the Church herself can never need reform." And to conclude the matter we will say with Tantucci, that she meant neither more nor less than what the Councils of Constance and Trent intended by their canons of reform. When those Councils can be claimed by historians as Hussite or Lutheran assemblies, we shall cheerfully admit St. Catherine among the ranks of the "morning stars."

To come to another branch of the subject, St. Catherine's devotions to the Saints were all marked and characteristic. First in order we must place her devotion to St. Paul. Caffarini tells us that in one of her ecstasies it was made known to her that she had tasted the same degree of bliss as was granted to St. Paul when rapt to the third heaven. She loved him for his love of his Lord; it was just of that generous, fearless, self-forgetting character which her own soul so well comprehended. In the prayer she composed on the Feast of his Conversion, she says some wonderfully beautiful and profound things as to the nature of that love. "O Paul, holy Apostle, you well understood this truth, whence you came and whither you were going, and by what road you must travel to reach your end. On the day when the Divine Word converted you from error to truth, you saw in rapture the Divine Essence in Three Persons. Then when you returned to your bodily senses you beheld the Incarnate Word, and understood that He, by His sufferings, was to be the glory of His Father and our salvation. Then you became famished and athirst for suffering; you forgot all else; you confessed that you knew nothing but Jesus, and Jesus crucified. Neither in the Father nor the Holy Spirit could you find suffering; and therefore it was that you said you knew none but Jesus, who suffered such great things for us; Jesus and *Jesus crucified.*" This gene-

rosity of the chosen Apostle was what so greatly endeared him to her, it was like the point of sympathy on which two friends meet and understand one another. His fervent words, his love for the very name of Jesus, his desire of suffering, his zeal for God's honour and the salvation of his brethren,—she felt and comprehended it all.

And next to him stood her glorious Father St. Dominic, the likeness and faithful pattern of the Son of God. She beheld him in vision resembling his Master even in his very person, no less than in his unalterable patience and his burning charity. From her earliest childhood it had been the dream of her imagination to serve God by the imitation of St. Dominic; and the fidelity with which she realised this idea is worthy of all admiration. In her nightly disciplines, in her desire of martyrdom, in her longing (like him) to give her body to torments, not once only, as she says, "but over and over again, each time with more pain than before," if by so doing she could win God some glory, or save one soul; in all this she was a faithful imitator of St. Dominic, as he was of Jesus Christ. So, too, in that profound humility which made him, before entering any town, kneel down and pray that his sins might not bring on it the Divine Judgment, Catherine followed closely on his track. For she believed all the evils in the world, all the woes of the Church, all the ruin of souls, over which she wept, to be the effect of her sins. "No more sin, O Lord, no more hell!" so she cried to God in prayer, asking that she might be placed in the mouth of hell to prevent sinners from going there. Such words are often enough regarded as pious exaggerations; but to understand them we must first understand *sin* as St. Catherine and St. Dominic understood it.

Of the other Saints of her own Order, St. Peter Martyr and St. Agnes of Montepulciano were her favourite patrons; she called St. Peter "the true knight without fear," and with St. Agnes, as we know, her relations were those of a familiar and holy friendship.

But what shall we say of her love of St. Magdalen, the saintly penitent, given her to be her mother by her Divine Spouse Him-

self? In all the lives of the Saints we shall scarcely find an example more striking of a special devotion to a chosen patron than that which St. Catherine displayed towards St. Mary Magdalen, the lover of our Lord. In one of his greatest works of art Fra Bartolomeo has depicted her side by side with St. Magdalen, contemplating the Eternal Trinity. He could hardly have better represented our idea of St. Catherine's fundamental devotion. Among the other Saints her preference was for the martyrs; and of these we may name St. Stephen, St. Lawrence, St. Agnes, and St. Lucy of Rome; the latter of whom, but little known, she specially loved, and was granted on her feast to share the merits of her martyrdom. In Rome she exulted in treading the ground consecrated by the blood of the martyrs. "They desired death," she says, "not to fly labour, but to attain their end. And why did they not fear death, from which man naturally so shrinks? Because they had vanquished the natural love of their own bodies by divine and supernatural love. How can such a man complain of the death of the body, he who desires to be set free from life which he finds both long and bitter? How can he regret to lose that which he despises? Nay, rather he desires to give his life for God Who is his Life, and to shed his blood for love of the Blood that was shed for him."[1]

Catherine comprehended the martyrs' spirit, because she shared it. For among her devotion we ought surely to number *her love of suffering*. Recalling in her Dialogue the memory of her own mystic death, she says: "When a soul that has been absorbed in God by love returns to her bodily senses, she endures life with difficulty, for she sees herself deprived of the union she had enjoyed with Him, and the desirable company of the Blessed. Yet, as her will is no longer her own, she can will nothing but His will. She desires to go to Him, yet she is content not to go, if so He ordain, but to remain and suffer for His glory. The more she suffers, the more she rejoices, for suffering soothes the desire she has of death, and the love of suffering sweetens the sorrow she feels not yet to be delivered from the body."[2] In Catherine's

[1] Dial., ch. 115.

[2] Dial., ch. lxxxiv.

mind suffering was identical with love: we cannot understand her practices of penance without remembering this. One in our own day has written that "to love is to suffer;" Catherine would have given those words her heartiest acceptance, and her profoundest interpretation; and she would also have reversed the terms and have said that "to suffer is to love;" indeed she does say so, repeating again and again, "The more we suffer, the more we prove our love."[1]

As to what are commonly called practices of devotion, her love of the Church Office certainly held the first place. The reader will remember her solicitude to be able to recite it, and knowing Who was wont to recite it with her, we do not need to be told that it could have been no common recitation of the Office that obtained so wondrous a favour. All the feasts and holy seasons were followed by her with a sympathy and depth of comprehension, which shows her feeding her soul on the language, the solemnities, and the order of the Sacred Ritual, which indeed supplies all true children of the Church with an ever-flowing torrent of spiritual recreation. Open the *Supplimento*, and you will see each new grace chronicled by no other date than the feast on which it occurred; and if sick, and unable to assist at the solemnities in which her soul delighted, she took comfort as she lay on her bed in gazing at the walls only of the distant cathedral. So long as she could use vocal prayers, which as time went on became impossible by reason of her ecstacies, she loved the Rosary and always wore it at her side. Her use of holy pictures and Crucifixes is apparent from the fact that in whatever place she sojourned some such object of piety is still shown which she is said to have used. Siena still keeps and venerates the miraculous *Madonna in Provenzana*, which according to tradition was first placed by her hands in the niche where it was discovered. She gave a Crucifix to the Convent of Monticella, and gladly received presents of crosses and images of the Holy Child. Her reception of the stigmas before the Crucifix at Pisa speaks for itself. Raymund tells us also that she had a

[1] *Quanto più sostiene, più dimostra che mi ami.* (Dial., ch. v.)

great love for pious pilgrimages. We know that she made many such, and her daily pilgrimage to St. Peter's during the last Lent of her mortal life, excruciated as she was with bodily and mental pain, stands before us as one of the sublimest pictures in her life.

Only one other point seems to deserve a word of notice. What devotion is more distinctive of the pious Catholic than the devotion to the holy souls in purgatory? With many it is a sort of special vocation to devote themselves to the relief of these suffering souls. To St. Catherine also this devotion was intensely dear. The charity of Christ pressed her, until she could obtain the deliverance of those for whom she prayed. And it is a significant fact that the long torture of that pain in the side, which never left her, was a voluntarily accepted suffering for the relief of her father's soul.

In this review of the devotions of St. Catherine we have purposely selected those which best express the immense power with which she held the mysteries of Faith, believed by her in common with all the children of Holy Church. Doubtless in the contemplation of those mysteries she was favoured with extraordinary lights such as no soul can attain by any human industry, and which gave a sublimity to her doctrine, declared in the Bull of Canonisation to have been "not acquired but infused." Her eye, as it penetrated the truths of Faith, was permitted to behold in their amazing depths things which, in the very language of St. Paul, she declared to be unutterable;—They were the *Arcana Dei*, the secrets of God. In those higher revelations—those "divine things" which "came upon her" from the hand of God, and seemed to transform her from a mere creature of flesh and blood into a seraph illuminated by a ray from the unapproachable Light—in these sublimer heights we cannot follow her. But there is a track left by her footsteps in which all may safely tread, a lesson which we can best express in her own admirable words: "The guide and support of the human will is the sacred light of Faith; for that light is the beginning, middle, and end of all perfection."[1]

[1] Prayer 7.

CHAPTER XI

A Last Glance at the Family

AND now, before closing our narrative, it remains for us to take a last look at that little company of faithful disciples whom we have so often seen gathered round their Mother, taking part in her works, or gathering from her lips the maxims of perfection. On the event of her death they were scattered, as to their bodily presence, though the spiritual links that bound them together remained unbroken to the last. The first concerning whose after-career we naturally desire to know something, is Father Raymund of Capua. Elected to the chief office in his Order within a few weeks after Catherine's departure, the remaining nineteen years of his life were devoted to three duties: the defence of the Church against the schismatics, the reform of his Order, and the composition of the Legend, or biography of his holy penitent. Of the first of these we shall say little more than that Urban and his successors in the Holy See are declared to have found in Father Raymund "their right arm and eye." That in the midst of the unspeakable troubles of the Schism, he should have been able to have begun and successfully to have carried on a reform of those abuses in the Order which Catherine had in her lifetime deplored, speaks not a little for his courage and talent for government. According to the common sentiment of all historians of the Order, it is to St. Catherine herself that we must attribute that movement in the direction of reform which made itself sensible after her death, and which was mainly carried on by her disciples. "It was St. Catherine," says P. Vincenzo Marchese, in his life of B. Lawrence of Ripafratta,

"who by her earnest exhortation had moved Blessed Raymund of Capua resolutely to put his hand to the work of reformation; and it was her no less beneficial influence that gained to the Order that daughter of Peter Gambacorta of Pisa, who became the reformer of its religious women. And although Catherine herself, worn out by suffering, departed to the heavenly kingdom, yet Raymund, as soon as he was placed at the head of the Order of Preachers, delayed not to carry her wishes into effect. He made a pressing appeal for succour to all those who had a zeal for God and their holy Institute, which was quickly responded to in Germany by F. Conrad of Prussia, and in Italy by B. John Dominic, F. Thomas (Caffarini) of Siena, B. Lawrence of Ripafratta, and F. Thomas Ajutamicristo; the two last-named Fathers belonging to the convent of Sta. Caterina at Pisa. But long before they began their labours, Blessed Clara Gambacorta, impatient of delay, set on foot the reform among her own Sisters, enclosing herself with a few religious under a very strict rule in the convent of San Domenico, on the 29th of May, 1382. From this convent, as from a copious fountain-head, went forth those who reformed the communities of Genoa, Parma, and Venice. And not satisfied with this, by her prayers and counsels she greatly promoted the cause of reform even among the Friars themselves, so that the Dominican Order, with reason, regards Blessed Clara as another St. Teresa."

What is here said of the influence of Blessed Clara over the Friars, and her promotion of the reform no less among their convents than in those of her religious Sisters, is amply confirmed by a reference to the chronicle of Sta. Caterina of Pisa; from which we find that all the most holy religious of that community gathered round her as round a mother; and it is considered sufficient praise to bestow on Fra Niccolo Gittalebraccia, one of the pillars of the reform, to say that he was *de intimis filiis sororis Claræ de Gambacurtis.* Nevertheless, this very convent of Sta. Caterina of Pisa for a considerable time opposed itself to the reform, and Blessed Clara's disciples had to carry on the good work in more distant provinces. Raymund, on his part, laboured without ceasing

to establish discipline and regular observance, but he invariably did so in the spirit of meekness. "He always exhibited the utmost gentleness in his government," says Caffarini, "being liberal and discreet to all, and severe only to himself. He lived in great poverty to the day of his death, which took place at Nuremberg, on the 5th of October, 1399." Though never beatified, he is always remembered in the Order by the title of "Blessed Raymund." He completed the Legend about the year 1395, having been engaged on it at intervals for fifteen years, Caffarini tells us that he himself assisted the author in his laborious task, in the course of which Raymund used great and praiseworthy diligence in collecting from their own lips the evidence of all those who had known Catherine most intimately, such as her mother Lapa, Lisa, Alexia, and the rest. In 1395, Raymund, coming from Sicily to Venice, brought the manuscript with him; and delivering it to Caffarini, who was then established in that city, desired him to have copies of it made and distributed into every province; a duty to which he and his companions devoted themselves with such ardour, that in an incredibly short space of time the Legend of St. Catherine was diffused throughout every country in Christendom. There are few things more remarkable in the history of literature than the rapid circulation of this book, unaided by the art of printing, and its translation into every known dialect. On its completion, Raymund applied himself to the translation of the Dialogue into Latin, carefully consulting the three secretaries to whom the original had been dictated, in order to secure perfect accuracy. The Abbé Fleury, in the truly astonishing remarks he has made on St. Catherine and her writings, has thought fit to express his surprise that her secretaries should have written in Latin what she dictated in Tuscan; but his words only betray his entire ignorance of the facts. The Dialogue was both dictated and written in Tuscan; that same Tuscan text which we still possess; and its Latin versions by Christofano and Raymund were not made until some years after her death.

From Raymund we will pass to St. Catherine's other Confessors. F. Thomas della Fonte survived her ten years, during part of

which time he filled the office of Prior of San Domenico, and took great delight in causing paintings and images of the holy virgin to be made and placed in various parts both of the church and the city. Caffarini affirms[1] that he even placed in the Church of the Friars, and in a very conspicuous place (*in posto elevato*), a picture of the Saint receiving the Stigmata; and after the great procession which has been described in the preceding chapter, he successfully exerted himself to obtain from the Magistrates that the same solemnity should be annually observed in their city.

F. William Flete is often said to have died in the same year as St. Catherine. His "Sermon," already referred to, and dated as having been delivered in 1382, proves this statement to be erroneous; but it is probable that he did not long survive her. Master John the Third returned from Rome to Lecceto immediately after her death, and was still living in 1391.

F. Bartholomew Dominic took an active part in the reform of the Order under Raymund of Capua, a work for which his learning, holiness, and singular prudence specially qualified him. He filled many high offices in his Order, was for seven years Provincial of the Roman Province, Procurator for the Order in Rome, and finally became titular Bishop of Corona in the Morea. He had the happiness of labouring in concert with F. Thomas Caffarini for the reform and extension of that branch of the Order to which St. Catherine more particularly belonged; and also of giving his most important evidence in that "Process of Venice," so often quoted in the preceding pages. As to F. Thomas Caffarini, his career was a yet more active and illustrious one. As a writer, he has certainly done more to illustrate the life of St. Catherine than any other of her disciples. We have seen that he assisted Raymund in the composition of the original Legend. When it was completed, he wrote his own *Leggenda Minore*, introducing many incidents which Raymund had omitted; and finally he drew up his Supplement to the Legend, at the earnest solicitation of a vast number of religious persons, specially of the Camaldolese Hermits of Florence, and the Carthusians of Vienna.

[1] Sup., Part 3, § 1.

The letter addressed to him by the good hermits does them infinite credit as judicious readers and critics. They had both read the Legend and relished it, but they wanted more. "For our common and greater edification," they say, "we desire to be informed of all the daily, manual, and most minute actions of Catherine, of her conversations, her exercises, her particular ways of speaking, of whatsoever movements were noticeable in her gait, and the gestures of her hands and feet." We entirely sympathise with these their holy desires, and do not by any means accuse them as guilty of vain curiosity. We only wish that F. Thomas had more literally complied with their request, the rather that in one respect they set him an excellent example by dating their letter, August 26th, 1400. Not content with this first appeal, they sent him a second the following April, conjuring him to spare no pains in collecting the least little saying of the holy virgin, whether recorded in Latin or Italian; and to look very sharp after his copyists, lest, overcome with weariness, they should cheat, by leaving out some *minute cosarelle*, whereas he should oblige them to set down all with sincere fidelity. "For if you do otherwise," continues the Prior, "and are guilty of any negligence in this matter, be sure that you will have a rigorous account to give before the Tribunal of God." He adds that he has a few books about Catherine, one in particular which he has read over and over again *da capo a piedi*, namely, her wonderful Dialogue; and he concludes by spurring his friend on to expedition by reminding him of the shortness of life, and the fact that no one could be so fit to undertake the work as he.

As if this were not enough to drive F. Thomas to seize his pen and begin at once, the General of the Carthusians, who could have been none other than his old friend Stephen Maconi, forwarded him a letter on the 5th of August, written by another Don Stephen of the Certosa of Vienna, who relates to his Superior, by no means briefly, a tale of woe and of deliverance. It seems that on the night of Saturday, in the Octave of Pentecost, he had felt extremely ill, and was in such pain that he could neither stand, sit, nor lie down, nor rest either on his back or his side. When

the signal for Matins was given, he was in great perplexity, not knowing whether to get up, or stay where he was. He felt sure he could not stand upright in choir, yet did not like to absent himself. So he bethought him that he would recite the Office of Our Lady, which he did, but could hardly remember if he did it mentally or vocally; indeed, he had very little voice left, and what there was, was extremely hoarse. Suddenly there came to his mind certain reports that he had heard of the wonderful assistance which the Blessed Catherine of Siena was used to give to those who invoked her. He began therefore to pray, that if what was commonly reported concerning her Sacred Espousals were true, he might, as a sign thereof, be immediately cured. Instantly he felt himself relieved of his pain; and going to the choir, was in time to sing the Lauds of the next day's solemnity in honour of the Holy Trinity, with his brethren. These letters seem to have made a great impression on F. Thomas, and the end of it was that he resolved to commence his Supplement without further delay. In one of the Prologues prefixed to the work, he apologises for thinking it necessary to add anything to Raymund's biography; but explains that though that holy man was the best authority who could be referred to for those years during which he acted as Catherine's director, yet these did not include the earlier portion of her life, the materials of which Raymund was obliged to gather from others, and concerning which he himself was better informed.

Thus much for Caffarini's written labours relating to the holy virgin. They formed but a small part of those to which he devoted himself in order to promote her honour. Soon after her death he undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, returning whence he came to Venice, and was there lovingly captured by Blessed John Dominic, who by that time had taken the lead in the work of reform. He rightly judged that no one was better fitted to assist in that work than the chosen friend of St. Catherine; one who for long years had enjoyed her confidence, and who, as might well be believed, had imbibed her spirit. At Venice, therefore, Caffarini was thenceforward fixed; and there

he effected many wonderful conversions, among which is specially noted that of a certain lady named Maria Storiona, who, from a life of worldly vanity, was so entirely changed by his preaching, that she embraced a course of austere penance, which merited for her after death the title of Blessed.

During the remainder of his life Caffarini laboured without ceasing to maintain or restore regular observance in the convents of the Friars, and to extend that Third Order which had been rendered so illustrious by the sanctity of St. Catherine. He re-wrote the Rule of the Sisters of Penance in Italian, and established several regular convents of their Order, in which work he was greatly assisted by F. Bartholomew Dominic, and the Blessed John Dominic. Indeed his zeal in this matter was so great that, as Ferdinand Castiglio tells us in his History of the Order, Caffarini was commonly, though inaccurately, called *the Founder of the Claustral Order of Penance;* that is, of those convents of the Sisters of Penance in which was established the regular religious and community life. Besides this, in concert with Stephen Maconi, he ceased not to copy, translate, and cause to be circulated, the Life, Letters, and Dialogue of the Saint. Applications were made to him for these books from many princes, and illustrious personages, among others from King Henry IV. of England; and he did his best to satisfy their demands, and to take every step which the difficulties of the time rendered possible to obtain her canonisation. On this point hope long deferred did not in the least abate his ardour. If he did not live to see his desires accomplished, it was he who prepared the way for their accomplishment, and like another David he was content to collect the materials out of which those who came after him were to raise the actual edifice. During the forty years of his residence at Venice he introduced there, and wherever his influence extended, the custom of celebrating the 29th of April as the anniversary of Catherine's death. On that day preachers pronounced her eulogy, her portrait was exhibited and decorated with a profusion of flowers, formed into crosses, bouquets, wreaths and crowns, this being the favourite manner

of honouring the memory of her who in her lifetime was such a lover of flowers. And, says Caffarini, it was fitting that it should be so, for the Cross of Jesus was the flowery couch of her love; she was destined to collect a multitude of souls as a nosegay of sweet flowers to offer to God; her own words and works were like so many bouquets, and she herself blossomed in the Eternal Paradise in the month which is the season of flowers. For sixteen consecutive years he preached on this festival; and during one Lent we are assured that he preached daily, explaining the Gospel of the day, and illustrating it by examples drawn from the life of Catherine. Not the least remarkable incident connected with these honours rendered to the Saint, was the extraordinary multiplication of her portraits. The faithful who attended the celebration of her festival demanded them in such numbers that a process was devised by which they were struck off from wooden blocks, in a manner which seems to have anticipated the invention of wood-engraving.

But in 1411 objections were made to these celebrations of the anniversary of a person not yet canonised, though it would seem that at that time such proceedings were very commonly permitted. However, the affair was referred to Francis Bembo, Bishop of Venice, and Legate of the Holy See; and an inquiry was instituted, in the course of which twenty-five witnesses were examined with all possible formality. The proceedings were not closed until the 5th of January, 1413; and the depositions of the witnesses form that celebrated *Process of Venice* so often quoted in the foregoing pages. The result of the investigation was entirely to exonerate the Friars from all blame in what they had done to honour the memory of the holy Virgin of Siena; and the depositions, thus carefully collected, were afterwards used in the Process of her canonisation. That event Caffarini did not live to witness, though he survived to an advanced age. His death took place in the year 1434, and the veneration with which he was regarded by his brethren is shown by the title of "Blessed," which is commonly prefixed to his name.

Of the religious Sisters of St. Catherine, and their history subse-

quent to her death, few particulars have, unfortunately, been preserved. Those who were left in Rome formed themselves into a Community, of whom Alexia was the first Superioress; but she did not survive her beloved friend and Mother more than two years, and was succeeded in the government of the little family by Lisa. They at first continued to live in the house in the Via del Papa where the Saint had died, but some years later were transferred to a more suitable residence; and the Community, which now occupies the convent of Santa Caterina, not far from that of San Domenica e Sisto in Magnanapoli, derives its origin from St. Catherine's own religious daughters.

The two worthy citizens of Siena, Master Matthew of the Misericordia, and Ser Christofano di Gano, must not be dismissed without a word. Of the first, we read that he continued the same kind, affable, and generous friend he had ever shown himself; regarding hospitality to the children and disciples of the holy virgin Catherine as a sacred duty. Anything that had belonged to her he gathered up and kept as a precious relic, were it no more than the smallest particle of her dress. He somehow got possession of one of her fingers, the index finger of the right hand; and placing it in a silver reliquary, he gave it to the Church of San Domenico. He survived until the arrival of Pope Gregory XII. at Siena, which was in the September of the year 1407, loving nothing so much as to speak of the virtues and recall the sayings of his beloved Mother. Being taken with his last sickness, he devoutly received all the Sacraments of Holy Church, and the Indulgence of which the Saint had received a grant from Pope Gregory XI. in favour of him and of seventy-seven of her other disciples. As to Ser Christofano, he lived to fill the important office of Lord Defender of the republic of Siena, and an excellent magistrate he no doubt made. This was in 1383 and 1384; and six years later his wife and all his seven children died of the plague within a few months of one another. After this domestic calamity, which freed him from those worldly shackles he had been half unwilling to assume, the old inclination revived in his heart to have done with the world altogether, and to seek a more

perfect life. So, on the 14th of August, 1391, he took the habit of the oblates of St. Augustine, and dedicated himself, like a brave man as he was, to the service of the sick in the hospital of La Scala, where his exemplary character and business-like habits eventually procured for him the honourable office of Chancellor. The habit of these Brethren of La Scala was black, adorned at the side with the badge of a red ladder. And so our good Christofano appears in the painting which may still be seen in the "Pellegrinajo," as it is called; that is, the hall where the pilgrims going to Rome are lodged and entertained. But besides his work in the hospital, there was another work to which Christofano devoted himself, and at which he continued to labour until his dying day. Conjointly with Master Paul, Rector of the hospital, and Nicolas de Benvenuto, Archbishop of Ragusa, he tried to procure from Gregory XII. the canonisation of the Saint. The Archbishop had received from Christofano a copy of his Latin translation of the Dialogue, which so enchanted him that he never rested till he had translated it into Sclavonic for the benefit of his flock; and leaving Ragusa, he came to Siena, where Gregory then was, with the express purpose of petitioning for Catherine's canonisation. Gregory was fully as devout to her memory as any of those who pressed him with their solicitations; but at that time the grievous troubles of the Schism prevented the accomplishment of their wishes, and the Archbishop, dying at Siena, was buried in the church of San Domenico, "just on that spot," says Caffarini in the third part of his Supplement, "where Catherine had received from our Lord the gift of His Heart," leaving to Caffarini, with the permission of the Pope, all his writings, in which he had collected many things relative to the Saint.

The various devices conceived by Christofano for keeping up the memory of St. Catherine and promoting devotion to her were truly admirable. His veneration for her had first made him turn author; it now equally prompted him to become a patron of the arts. "Out of reverence to the said Catherine," he says, "I had her painted in the Duomo, near the Campanile, in the chapel of St. James Interciso, whom I also had painted there. I had a

great devotion to St. James, because, when I went into Lombardy on the affairs of a certain senator, I saw him painted in a chapel. So I had him painted at Armaiuolo, in a corner of our vineyard, among other figures that are there." In no degree discouraged in the sacred duty he had imposed on himself, of obtaining the exaltation of his holy Mistress to the altars of the Church, he kept up an incessant agitation on the subject by means of letters addressed now to Caffarini, at Venice, and now to Stephen Maconi, who, as Prior-General of the Carthusians, had been called into Austria on the affairs of his Order. Christofano urged him to return, that with their united prayers and representations they might move the heart of the Pope. He was, however, doomed to disappointment. Gregory left Siena for Lucca; and poor Christofano fell sick of a painful and tedious malady. Before he died, however, he had the consolation of once more greeting his old friend Stephen, who at last returned to Siena. "When Christofano saw him" (says the author of Stephen's life), "he embraced him lovingly, and exclaimed, 'Thou hast come at last, O Father, dear above all other friends: therefore I give thanks to God that He has heard my prayer, and suffered me once more to see thee ere I depart out of this life.' Then Stephen began to speak of the goodness of God, and the protection which the Seraphic Virgin of Siena displayed towards her sons who were still living in the world. As he spoke, Christofano's soul seemed to overflow with sweetness, and raising himself a little in his bed, he cast up his eyes to heaven, as though answering God Who called him, and so peacefully expired—all who stood by being full of wonder to see that the soul of Christofano should have been thus detained in his body, until he could die in the presence of his beloved Stephen."[1]

Francis Malevolti, concerning whom the reader will remember that Catherine had uttered a prophecy, and who, in spite of his immense veneration for the holy virgin, had never, during her life, entirely overcome the fluctuations of his soul between the movements of nature and the pleadings of divine grace, shall tell his own story in his own words, for none can tell it better.

[1] Vit. Steph. Mac., lib. iv. cap. I.

On the occasion when some of the Sisters of Penance had complained of him and his want of perseverance in the ways of grace, Catherine had told them not to be troubled, for that the day would come when she would put such a yoke on his neck as he should never be able to shake off. When these words were spoken, both he and the Sisters standing by laughed merrily, having no notion what they might mean. He had at that time a wife and children, and seemed as unlikely a man to embrace a religious life as could well be imagined. "But after the holy virgin had departed to her Spouse," he says, "my wife and children also having paid the debt of nature, I found myself alone and free from all ties. I neither thought of, nor cared for, the words above related; but being alone, I found myself harassed by many who urged me again to enter into the state of matrimony. Nevertheless our Lord, Who would not that the words of His spouse should be falsified, found out a new way of binding me with the bonds she had foretold. One of my uncles, named Nicoluccio, who was considered to be a man of singular prudence, seeing my delight in horses and armour, said to me one day, 'Francesco, what do you intend to do? I should like you either to marry, or if that does not suit you, that you should do something else.' I asked him what he was thinking of, and he replied, 'I should like, as you are so fond of arms and horses, that you should become a Knight of St. John, and so indulge your taste without risking your salvation.' It was wonderful he should say this, and quite beyond human calculation, for he was not at all given to spiritual things, but much involved in worldly affairs. However, though I had never thought of the matter before, I at once gave my consent. It was agreed I should go to Genoa where the Chapter of the Knights was then being celebrated; and there I was unanimously accepted, and a commission appointed to bestow on me the knightly dignity and the habit of the Order. I returned first to Siena, however, and busied myself collecting horses, arms, and other things required for my purpose. All being concluded, it came to the very day preceding that on which I was to be made a Knight. In the middle of the night as I lay on my bed (I cannot say whether I was awake or

asleep), behold, the glorious virgin Catherine appeared to me, and touching me, she said: 'Rise, negligent that thou art, and sleep no longer; seest thou not that I have found a way of breaking all thy bonds? and still thou followest nothing but the vanities of the world. Rise, and seek thy companion, Neri di Landoccio, and go both of you to the house of the Brethren of Mount Olivet, and there thou shalt without opposition be received. Dost thou not remember how I once said to thee that when thou shouldst think me to be far away from thee I should be nearer to thee than ever, and subject thy neck to such a yoke that thou shouldst never be able to shake it off?' When I answered: 'O my mother, do you not know how many and great things these monks do, and what long trials they require before they consent to receive any one into their Order?' and with many other words I tried to resist the Holy Spirit, and the glorious handmaid of Christ. But she said, 'If you do not fulfil what I have told you, you will not be able to accomplish what you now purpose doing; but will fall into great dangers,' and with that she disappeared. Now, when I came to myself and recalled what had passed, I was filled suddenly and miraculously with the most ardent desire of taking the habit of these brethren, so that the remainder of the night seemed intolerably long. When day dawned I went at once outside the city to Neri, whom I found already risen, for, as he afterwards told me, the same holy virgin had appeared to him, and had said, 'Expect thy friend Francesco Malevolti, and go with him to the house of Mount Olivet.' This Neri was at that time living near the city in the habit, and leading the life of a hermit. So we went both together to the monastery aforesaid, which is about fourteen miles from Siena, and is the principal house of the Order; where in the absence of the Abbot-General, the Prior of the house and the ancient Fathers, understanding my petition, with one accord agreed to receive me." After this nothing remained for Francesco save to return to the city in order to sell his horses and other property; and returning to the convent, he at once entered on the new life to which he had been so strangely called, and in which he persevered happily for many years, and died a holy death.

It remains to speak of Catherine's three secretaries, Neri, Stephen, and Barduccio Canigiani. Barduccio after her death became a secular priest. "In her last moments," says Raymund, "Catherine enjoined him to attach himself to me and place himself under my direction; she did it without doubt because she was aware that he would not live long: in fact, a short time after he was attacked with consumption, and although he appeared at first to be convalescent, it soon became evident that there was no hope of his recovery. Fearing that the air of Rome was hurtful to him, I sent him to Siena, where he slept peacefully in the Lord. Those who witnessed his death declare that at his last moments he looked up to heaven smiling, and gave up his soul with such lively tokens of joy, that death itself could not efface their impression from his countenance: he probably saw her whom he had loved during life with such purity of heart, come forth to meet him, in the glory of triumph." His death took place little more than a year after that of his saintly Mother. Neri di Landoccio, to whom the merit certainly belongs of having been the means of introducing almost all his fellow-disciples to the Saint's acquaintance, returned from Naples to Rome in time to assist at her funeral, and witnessed all the wonderful events which then took place. He has told his own tale of sorrow and bereavement in two poems, in which he embalmed the holy memory of his saintly Mother, and gave vent to all the emotions which such an event would naturally elicit in his sensitive and loving heart. "O Spouse!" he exclaims, "elected to the throne of the blessed; O name, at the naming of which my heart is breaking, O refreshment in every grievous loss! Tell me what shall I do? for thy departure fills my afflicted heart with new and redoubled sorrows. Tell me who will now deliver me from an evil end? who will guard me from delusion? who will now point out to me the upward path? who will any longer comfort me in my troubles? who will any more say to me, 'Thou art not going on well'? who will encourage me? who will reprove me now? All these things make the tears to flow down my cheeks, until thou assurest me of that which thou didst promise me at Lucca."

Neri was not at once able to retire to his hermitage. He had hurried from Naples to attend the funeral before his business there was complete, and had to return thither immediately afterwards, for it was there he received the letter of Nigi di Doccio which has been already quoted. As soon as he could, he made his way back to Siena, in order to commence that solitary life to which his own inclination, no less than the Saint's commands, invited him.

His hermitage was outside the Porta Nuova of Siena. Here he gave himself up to a life of prayer and austerity, not however entirely neglecting literature and poetry. A letter followed him from Naples from his friend Giunta di Grazia, about a book which he had lent him, which was badly written and incorrect, begging him to procure a better one, and also to return "*quello pezo di Dante*," which Giunta had left with him. In 1391 Stephen Maconi writes to him, "Those verses you sent me written with your own hand I have had copied on parchment in fine letters, well illuminated; and I gave them to the Duke's High Councillors, who were much pleased, and commended them greatly." No doubt these were some of the verses already quoted, or others on the same subject, for we learn from Caffarini in the third part of his "Supplement," that "he made many rhymes and devout songs in praise of the holy virgin, which *he wrote out with his own hand, and distributed to his friends.*" All his poems, however, were not on St. Catherine, and in the Bodleian Library is preserved at this time a MS. poem of his, a legend of St. Giosaffa, written in *ottava rima.* But besides his poems, he busied himself in other works connected with the memory of the Saint. Caffarini tells us that it was chiefly at his solicitation that F. Raymund wrote the Legend in Latin, and when finished, Neri, at the request of Caffarini, undertook and began its translation into Italian; but dying before the completion of the work, it was finished by another hand, Neri's translation only going as far as the fourth chapter of the second part.

By what has been already said, the reader will have gathered some idea of Neri's natural disposition. St. Catherine's letters

have shown his habitual tendency to religious despondency, and in the retirement of his hermitage this constitutional infirmity at one time assumed an alarming form. For two years his dear friend Stephen received no tidings from him, and at last understood that the cause had been a temporary access of mental malady. Family troubles, and the threatened war between Siena and Florence, had come to the aid of long austerities, and for a time broke down the fine mind and sensitive organisation. "I hear from Leoncino," writes Stephen, "that you have been *alienato;*" but in his next letter he says, "It seems by your letter written on the Purification that you have recovered from that accidental derangement" (*alienazione*). In fact it was only a temporary attack, nor do we hear that it ever returned. For Neri was by no means a fanciful hypochondriac. Caffarini calls him a "*Vir mirabilis*," and even in his hermitage he was looked up to as a man of influence and weight. Everybody wrote to him and consulted him—Maconi, Caffarini, Francis Malevolti, and the Carthusians of Lucca. It would seem he was not always very prompt in answering their letters, but in spite of that, they all looked up to him, and valued him as an adviser. His chief friends, however, were the Olivetan Monks, then enjoying a wide repute as living in great fervour and observance. He was also inseparably united with Gabriel Piccolomini (who with him had been an eyewitness of that prodigy described by F. Raymund, when St. Catherine fell into the fire and received no injury), and with his brother poet, Anastagio da Montalcino, whose poem on the Saint, written in her lifetime, has been so frequently quoted. Neri lived to a great age, and in his last sickness, out of motives of humility, he caused himself to be removed from his hermitage to the hospital of La Scala. There he placidly expired in 1406. We are half reluctant to quote the letter in which Luca di Benvenuto, one of the Olivetan Monks, communicates to a friend the intelligence of Neri's death. In it the tragic mingles with the comic, and the latter, it must be owned, prevails:

"LUCA DI BENVENUTO TO SER JACOMO.

"*Ave Maria.*

"DEAREST FATHER IN CHRIST,—My negligence—I need say no more—but yet with grief and sorrow I write to you, how our Father, and our comfort, and our help, and our counsel, and our support, and our refreshment, and our guide, and our master, and our receiver, and our preparer, and our waiter, and our visitor, and he who thought for us, and our delight, and our only good, and our entertainer: and his meekness, and his holy life, and his holy conversation, and his holy teachings, and all his holy works, and his holy words, and his holy sayings, and his holy investigations. Alas, miserable ones! alas, poor wretches! alas, orphans! where shall we go, to whom shall we have recourse? Alas! well may we lament, since all our good is departed from us! I will say no more, for I am not worthy to remember him, yet I beg of you that as it is the will of God, you will not let yourself be killed by the news; know then—alas! I don't know how I can tell you—alas! my dear Ser Jacomo; alas! my Father and my Brother, I know not what to do, for I have lost all I cared for. I do not see you, and I know not how you are. Know, then, that our love and our Father—alas! alas! Neri di Landoccio, alas!—took sick on the 8th of March, Monday night, about daybreak, on account of the great cold,—and the cough increasing, he could not get over it, alas! He passed out of this life, confessed, and with all the Sacraments of Holy Church, on the 12th of March, was buried by the Brethren of Mount Olivet outside the *Porta Tufi*, and died in the morning, at the Aurora, at break of day.[1] I know there is no need to recommend to you his blessed soul, and I, miserable as I am, am left to dispense all he left. I grieve you were not present at his end, and to undertake this business. It is left to me that you should have something; I don't know if it is the best, but I will keep your things, unless I die. Pray for Neri's

[1] Luca, as will be observed, buries him first, and makes him die afterwards. We endeavour to be literal, however, in the translation.

soul, and for me, Luca. And also to you, Ser Christofano, I must say something, but what I say to one I say to the other, may God keep us all in His grace! I beg of you, for God's sake, send me word how you are. Your parents are well. I need not say what a loss Neri is, you know it well. After Lent come, or send me word what I am to do with your things.—Your miserable

"LUCA DI BENVENUTO.

"*P.S.*—I, Luca, have given to Ceccanza . . . two new Capuces and a gown.

"To Neri de le Cancella, I gave a foot cover, and a pair of new stockings, and a pair of shoes, and a pair of leather stockings.

"To Monna Caterina (the Tertiary), I gave three chest preservers, and two old ones, and a pair of stockings, and socks, and also some old foot covers very much torn, and a gown, also torn; and the old cloak, and an old grey petticoat (!) and two old feather pillows, and a broken bed, and a pair of spectacles, and a shirt, and an old chair.

"To Monna Nera, a pair of torn sheets and a bed, very much broken, and a gown, mended and patched.

"To Dominic di Lorenzo, an old shirt.

"To Cecco, a sheath, and his spectacles.

"To Maltra, 10 soldi.

"To the Friars of Monte Oliveto, 62 soldi.

"To Tonghino, a bag, and an old torn towel."

In this very curious distribution of goods, the Friars of Monte Oliveto certainly came best off; but we must not be malicious. Neri left to them all his books, writings, and notes, as well regarding the holy virgin as on other matters. A picture of the Saint which he had caused to be painted, came into the possession of Padre Antonio Benedetto, of the same Order, and he made a graceful present of it to Master Paul, Rector of the Hospital of La Scala, and an old disciple of the Saint.

One member, and one only, of the little family remains to be spoken of, and we have reserved him to the last, because there is more to tell about him, and because he claims perhaps a larger

share in our interest than any of his companions. First then, let us hear in what terms Stephen Maconi pours out his grief for their late bereavement in writing to his old friend Neri. The letter is dated from Rome, February 18th, 1381; whence we find that Stephen remained in that city for ten months after St. Catherine's death. Its style contrasts forcibly enough with the light-hearted and careless letters of former days, and tells of a blow which had struck to the heart; one of those touches by which God works out the sanctity of His servants, as the master sculptor fashions his statues by repeated blows of chisel and hammer. "Your return to Rome," he says, "was anxiously looked for by me, your useless and miserable brother. For as it has pleased the Divine Goodness so severely to punish my ingratitude, depriving you as well as me of that precious treasure which I did not rightly know or value, I desired to find myself once more with you, above all our brethren in Christ, that I might pour out my heart to so loving a brother, and confer with you on many things. But it seems that God did not so permit. Then I hoped to have met you at Siena, but that also was not allowed: and not only have I been deprived of your presence, but I have not even deserved to receive a short letter from you. Perhaps our good God wished to deprive me of the presence of all those with whom I thought to have taken a little comfort, in order that I might the better draw near to Him the Creator of all, and that without the intervention of any creature. In His inestimable charity may He grant me the grace to do this, and to do it manfully."

He met with no small difficulty on the part of his family to his resolution of becoming a Carthusian; but at last, some time in the April of 1381, he commenced his novitiate at Pontignano. During the whole of his time of probation he steadily refused to see any of his friends, but his Superiors insisted on his relaxing this rule in favour of St. Catherine's disciples. He wrote to Neri a few weeks after he had entered the monastery, beginning his letter, dated the 30th of May, "To my sweetest and most beloved Brother in Christ, *and in the holy memory*."

"BELOVED BROTHER,—I write to inform you with great joy that our loving Lord in His goodness, and not for my merits, has cast the eye of His mercy on my misery, and has deigned that I should receive here the holy habit. I write that you may share the joy with which my heart is full. I do not relate the how and the why, only this I must tell you that our venerable Mother has amply fulfilled to me what she promised at the time of her happy death, that she would be more helpful after she was gone than ever she had been in life. And though it would have been very sweet to have seen and spoken with you, yet I hold your peace of mind as dear as my own. So I will not take amiss what, by God's grace, you are doing, since I firmly hope, as you say, that He, in His mercy, by the merits of the Blood of the Lamb, and the intercession of Mary (and of her in whom we are so closely bound together), will grant us the grace to see each other again in life eternal, provided that we follow on our way with manly hearts, without stopping or turning backwards. May He grant it Who is blessed for ever. Amen."

In December 1382 he writes again, no longer in the tone of a novice, for in fact, to his own great trouble, he had just been made Prior of Pontignano.

"DEAREST BROTHER IN JESUS CHRIST,—I shortly since received two letters from you, which were very welcome; reminding me of that holy time—by me so badly spent, so little understood or valued. And not to be tedious I ask of you, my sweet brother, to have compassion on me, and help me with your prayers; and to pray that God will give me the grace to amend my life, and that I may remain His true servant to the end; and that the burden He has been pleased to lay on my shoulders (the office of Prior) I may know how to carry to His honour, and my own salvation. When I took the holy habit, I thought, as I thanked God, to sing with the Psalmist, *Ecce elongavi fugiens et mansi in solitudine.* But the spouse of obedience, which our holy Mother gave me, has chosen rather that I should sing, 'I am become, as it were, a beast of burden before Thee.' So I

must once more glory in the Cross of Christ, and rejoice in it, and desire nothing beside it. It would be a great happiness to speak to my dear brother, but not to write. I know I can be of no use to you because of my sins, yet I confess that I desire the salvation of all, and specially of those whom God has engrafted in the very centre of my heart."

We pass over a few years, and open another letter, written in 1391 by Maconi, then General of his Order, and just returned from a visitation of his convents, to Neri, who was recovering from a severe illness in his hermitage, brought on by excessive austerity. The letter is too long to quote, but he relates how he had been at Genoa and had dined there "with our common Father, Master Raymund, and Brother Thomas Antonio (Caffarini) and others, with many holy conversations on sweet subjects. . . . And our venerable Mother, Madonna Orietta Scotta, with great charity recognised me for her son, and many other things I could tell you which I doubt not you would like to hear." Who could doubt that Neri would indeed like to have heard of these things, and would read them with tears of tenderness, remembering the time when he and Stephen were lodging in Orietta's house with their holy Mother, and when both of them were restored to health by her in the long years that were past.

Stephen Maconi became celebrated after his entrance into religion for carrying on one of the Saint's good works with great success, namely, the reconciliation of enemies, and in this he was much assisted by F. William Flete. He never forgot his beloved Mother, but was always doing something to promote her honour—now sending a young man on pilgrimage to her tomb, who came back restored in body and soul, now agitating for her canonisation, now propagating copies of her life. He himself translated into Italian the *Leggenda Minore* of Caffarini, and sent a copy of it to the King of England. He always kept in his cell the gold reliquary containing the relics of many saints which had been given to St. Catherine at Avignon, and had been before her at the moment of her death. In little things and great he loved to keep alive her memory; and was particularly fond of *beans*, because they

reminded him of a dinner he had had with her one Easter Day shortly before her death, when there was nothing else in the house, "for," says his biographer, Don Bartholomew, "the remembrance of that banquet stuck fast to the marrow of his spirit, so that when he was Superior he always adorned the table of his religious on Easter Day with the delicacy of beans; and the same pious custom flourished in several convents of the Order for many years."[1]

In 1401 he was elected General over that part of his Order which remained faithful to the obedience of Gregory XII., successor to Urban VI. The chief seat of this part of the Order was fixed in Austria, but when Gregory came to Siena, Stephen was summoned thither to join him, and accompanied him in many of his journeys. He exerted himself to induce the Pontiff to resign his dignity with a view to secure the peace of the Church; and what he advised, he himself put in practice; for going into France he succeeded in gathering together the disunited members of the Order; he induced Raymund Ferrer (brother to St. Vincent) who was General over the other half, to resign his office, doing the same himself; and so the two branches being reunited, elected a Superior who was accepted by all. This new General appointed Stephen his Vicar over all the convents of the Order in Italy, an office he held till his death. He resided at Pavia, at the splendid Certosa which had been founded in 1396 by Gian Galeazzo Visconti, in expiation of his crime in murdering his uncle and father-in-law, Bernabò Visconti, and all his family. The monastery of "Our Lady of Graces" is supposed to be the most splendid monastery in the world, though its splendour is rather that of a palace than a religious house. Here then Stephen Maconi spent the evening of his days, ever loving to speak of

[1] Either Don Bartholomew relates the circumstance of the bean banquet with several inaccuracies, or there were two such repasts. The one we have narrated (p. 176) took place in Siena on Ascension Day, 1373, before Stephen knew the Saint. Bartholomew places the scene of *his* story in Rome, on Easter Day, and very shortly before St. Catherine's death. However it may have been, the result was, that Stephen's Carthusian brethren always had beans to eat on Easter Day.

Catherine, and to repeat what he remembered of her instructions. Indeed, his biographer gives a sort of abstract of these instructions which the old man was accustomed to give to his monks. Towards the close of his life he became intimate with St. Bernardine of Siena, who was born in the very year of Catherine's death, and who delighted in nothing so much as to sit and hear Stephen pour out his recollections of their glorious fellow-citizen. And while Stephen found a sweet consolation mingled with sadness in thus dwelling on the memories of the past, the youthful friar felt his heart kindle as he listened, with holy emulation, and an increase of ardent charity.

Stephen died at Pavia on the 7th of August, 1424. At his last moments he repeated the verse *Maria, Mater gratiæ*, and then invoking the intercession of Catherine, he expired with her beloved name upon his lips.

And now our task is ended, and the time has come when to all these holy souls and loving hearts we must bid a last farewell. Not as the shadowless characters of a poem or drama have they come before us, the creatures of imagination demanding our sympathy with their fictitious sorrows and skilfully depicted passions. Far different from this has been our acquaintance with ST. CATHERINE AND HER COMPANIONS. For *she* is as truly a living and loving mother to us as any of the beings of flesh and blood by whom we are surrounded: and they who held her company, and who laid up for our benefit the treasures of their testimony, are our brethren and sisters also. There is between us the fellowship of sympathy: we understand their language, and they have opened to us their hearts.

Farewell, then, to you, faithful Lisa, and Alexia, beloved and privileged to the very end; farewell, Barduccio, found worthy to stand by thy Mother in her last combat and to hear her call thee "Son;"[1] to Neri, with his grave and pallid brow, the inspired poet, and the true-hearted friend; to Stephen, the careless one, but the best-beloved of all; to Matthew and Christofano, in whose company we have seemed to go about the streets of the old city,

[1] See p. 243.

and to mingle in all the ways and "doings" of their blameless lives; to each and all of you, farewell!

Farewell to all the scenes amid which we have seen you passing for so many a day; to the oaks of Lecceto, the vineyards of Montalcino, and the chestnut woods of Monte Amiata; to the streets and the churches which once you peopled in the grand old days of Siena's freedom; to the graves in San Domenico, where so many of you are laid to rest. It is well with you now, for the time of bitter separation is over, and the hour of reunion has come. We envy not your happiness, though we would gladly share it; and the thought of you and of "the holy memory" will help us through many a troublous day. Five long centuries have passed, since all of you, under the guidance of a Saint, fought out your combat and went to your reward. You lived human lives of common vicissitude, and were made of common mould like us; you were weak, and you stumbled; you fell, and you rose again. And now, all is over, and you are reunited with your Mother in the Eternal Presence; and you understand the tangled web of your past lives, and the meaning of all that once seemed so strange. As we think of you and think of her, time seems to vanish "like a needle's point," and we, too, look to a day not far distant, when parting shall be no more; and falling from the heavens like the echo of church bells, we seem to hear a chant in which your voices mingle with the voices of others who have gone before:

"*Absterget Deus omnem lacrymam ab oculis Sanctorum; et jam non erit amplius neque luctus, neque clamor, sed nec ullus dolor; quoniam priora transierunt.*"

CHAPTER XII

The Canonisation of St. Catherine

URBAN VI. died in 1389, and was succeeded in the line of the Roman Pontiffs by Boniface IX. and Innocent VII., both of whose Pontificates were of short duration. On the death of Innocent in 1406, Cardinal Angelo Corario of Venice, titular Patriarch of Constantinople, was elected Pope under the title of Gregory XII. The Antipope Clement VII. continued to reign at Avignon until 1394, and on his death the Cardinals of his obedience elected as his successor Cardinal Peter de Luna, who took the title of Benedict XIII. Both Gregory and Benedict were elected by their respective partisans under the promise of abdicating the Papal dignity, should a similar resignation be obtained from the rival Pontiff. The sincere desire on the part of all good men on either side was to extinguish the unhappy schism; and it was with this view and intention that in 1409 the Cardinals of both obediences assembled in council at Pisa, to confer on the necessary steps to be taken for restoring the peace of the Church. Their decision, unfortunately, only introduced greater disorder: for they took on themselves to declare both the reigning Popes deposed, and proceeded to elect a successor to the vacant dignity. The Pontiff thus irregularly elected took the name of Alexander V., but dying almost immediately, a fresh election was made at Bologna, the newly-chosen Pope being known as John XXIII. As, however, neither Gregory nor Benedict acknowledged the Cardinals as possessing the lawful authority to depose them, this ill-advised proceeding only increased the existing disorders, by adding a *third* claimant to the chair of

St. Peter. This miserable state of things lasted until 1417, when a General Council of the Church assembled at Constance. The voluntary abdication of Gregory XII. having been first obtained, the two other pretenders to the Papacy were deposed; and the election of a Pope, the validity of whose title should be universally acknowledged, became at last possible. On the 11th of November 1417, Otho Colonna was accordingly elected, taking the title of Martin V.; and thus Christendom was once more united under the obedience of one Supreme Head. The man who had probably the greatest share in bringing about this happy result was the Blessed John Dominic, then Cardinal Archbishop of Ragusa. He had already laboured nobly in carrying out one of St. Catherine's great desires, the reform of the Dominican Order; and it was his lot to be the chief instrument in realising another, by restoring peace to the Church.

But more than this, the Fathers of Constance, by the election of a *Roman* Pontiff, had brought about the permanent restoration of the Holy See to Rome. They also entered vigorously on the work of reform: in their 43rd Session they published many ordinances, having for their sole object the reform of the clergy; nor did they separate without declaring that another Council should shortly be called, for the express purpose of carrying out this great work more effectually. St. Catherine therefore had not lived in vain; the cause for which she had given her life was vindicated before the eyes of Christendom; and it is little wonder that Pope Martin and his successors should have been besieged by petitions from every quarter, to delay no longer in raising to the altars of the Church the holy maiden of Siena.

But this glory was reserved to a Pope, her countryman by birth, and the member of one of those noble families of Siena whose name had been borne by more than one of her disciples. Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini was probably the greatest scholar of his time, and had received the laurel crown from the hands of the Emperor Frederick III. He had travelled through every European country, including Scotland, whither he was sent as ambassador to King James I. from the Council of Basle. He

had filled the post of Secretary to the two Popes Eugenius IV. and Nicholas V.; he was created Bishop of Siena and Cardinal of Santa Sabina by Calixtus III.; and finally, in 1458, he was elected successor to the last-named Pontiff, taking the title of Pius II.

In the year following his election Pius II. came on a visit to Siena, where he remained two months, during which time he lavished favours on his countrymen with a liberal hand. Corsigni, his native place, was given the dignity of an Episcopal city, and received the new name of *Pienza;* the Pope bestowed the golden rose on the Signoria of Siena; he made several Sienese Cardinals; he raised the See of Siena to the rank of an Archbishopric; he restored to the nobles their municipal rights; and last, but not least, he resolved on the Canonisation of St. Catherine. Few contrasts could be greater than those which existed between these two illustrious fellow-citizens, or their respective claims to celebrity; between the ambassador of Frederick, and the ambassadress of Gregory; between the scholar of the Renaissance, and the author of the *Dialogo;* between the letters of Æneas Sylvius, and the letters of St. Catherine. Yet there was one point of closest sympathy between them, and the Pope who was to decree to Catherine the supreme honours of the Church, was one whose Pontificate was to be spent in strenuous, but unavailing, efforts to organise a fresh Crusade.

In fact, at that juncture, the rapid advance of the Turkish arms was threatening the safety of all Europe. In 1453 Constantinople had fallen, and the boundaries of the empire now began to be assaulted. True to their traditions, the Popes, as the Fathers of Christendom, had continued to warn the Christian sovereigns of their danger, and had laboured vigorously to concert measures of defence. Two men only had responded to their call; Huniades, the brave Regent of Hungary, who repulsed Mahomet II. from the walls of Belgrade; and George Castriot, better known as Scanderbeg, who chased the Turks out of Epirus, and restoring the independence of his native country, became its prince. For many years he upheld the cause of Christendom unsupported by

any other allies than the Roman Pontiffs. "Had the efforts of Calixtus III. been seconded by the princes of Christendom," says Platina, the contemporary and historian of that Pope, "the success of the Turks would have been rendered impossible; but in spite of the fair words which they gave to his ambassadors, none of them showed themselves ready to act, when there was question of their sacrificing their selfish interests."

Pius II., before his elevation to the chair of St. Peter, had taken an active part in all the measures concerted by the Sovereign Pontiffs for the defence of Christendom. He now devoted to the same cause all the talents and energies with which he was so remarkably endowed. He had conceived the design of calling a European Congress at Mantua for the purpose of forming a common league against the infidels; and on leaving Siena, he repaired to that city and opened the assembly in person, delivering an address so eloquent and touching as to move his audience to tears. The insane spirit of intestine dissension hindered the realisation of his hopes. Civil wars broke out simultaneously in Spain, England, Germany, and Italy; and though the Crusade was indeed proclaimed, the Pope was left to carry it on as best he could, unaided by a single European sovereign.

From Mantua he again returned to Siena, where he made a long sojourn, receiving there a crowd of embassies from the afflicted provinces of the East, who in the moment of supreme anguish looked to the Vicar of Christ as to their only hope. There was a singular suitability in the fact that these dying echoes of the crusading war-cry should have been heard in the native city of St. Catherine; nor was the coincidence lost on Pius II. On his return to Rome he took measures for proceeding without delay to her solemn canonisation; and the necessary formalities having been concluded, the Bull which raised her to the Altars of the Church was finally published on the 29th of June, being the Feast of the Holy Apostles, 1461. To mark his special devotion to the Saint of Siena, the Pope drew up her Office with his own pen. Nor is this the only composition in which Pius II. has celebrated her praises; for besides the hymns of that Office

which were written by him, we possess another little poem in which he may be said to have briefly epitomised her history: and it is worthy of notice that in this poem every one of the special and supernatural graces of St. Catherine's life are distinctly named: as her holy Espousals; the exchange of her heart with that of Christ; her mystic death and return to life, and her reception of the Stigmata.

The Pontificate of Pius II. terminated three years later, whilst he was engaged in a last supreme effort to organise the Crusade. He had succeeded in gaining to the cause Philip, Duke of Burgundy, the Doge of Venice, and several of the Italian rulers; and in the month of October 1463, he published an Encyclical letter addressed to all Christian princes and prelates, declaring his intention of proceeding in the year following to Ancona, where the fleet of the allies was then preparing to assemble, and of himself accompanying it to the shores of Greece and Asia. He kept his word, arriving at Ancona about the middle of July. There, however, he was attacked with fever, and expired on the 14th of August, 1464, and with him expired also the last hopes of the Crusade.

In the Piccolomini library, attached to the Duomo of Siena, may still be seen the ten grand frescoes, in the execution of which Pinturicchio is said to have been assisted by the youthful Raphael, representing the chief events in the life of this celebrated Pope. Among them we see the Proclamation of the Crusade at Mantua, the Canonisation of St. Catherine, and the preparations for the departure of the fleet from Ancona; and thus the name of the Saint in whose heart survived the spirit which had animated the first Crusaders, is indissolubly linked with the memory of the Pope by whose lips the holy war was for the last time proclaimed.

In the Bull of St. Catherine's canonisation the first Sunday in May was assigned as the day on which her feast was to be celebrated. In 1630, however, by a decree of Pope Urban VIII., this was changed to the 30th of April: the 29th of that month (on which day her death actually took place) being already occupied by the Feast of St. Peter Martyr. The same Pontiff brought to

a close a vexatious controversy which had been raised on the subject of the Saint's stigmas, by declaring them to have been "not bloody, but luminous." This declaration was in exact conformity with the narrative of Blessed Raymund; and the lessons of the Office, as approved by Pope Urban, so commemorate the fact. At a later period Pope Benedict XIII. granted to the whole Dominican Order, as well as to all the clergy of Tuscany, an Office of the Stigmas of St. Catherine; the 3rd of April being set apart to be kept as a feast in their honour. On the Thursday before Quinquagesima Sunday was formerly kept the commemoration of her holy Espousals; but this has been merged in the Feast of her Translation, which is now celebrated on that day, a new Office of the Translation having been granted to the Order by Pope Pius IX. in the year 1855. A few years later an additional honour was rendered to the Saint by the same holy Pontiff, who, by a decree dated April 13th, 1866, declared the Seraphic virgin, St. Catherine of Siena, secondary Patroness of the city of Rome; and her feast was thenceforth ordered to be celebrated throughout the Order with a solemn Octave.

THE END

ON CONSUMMATED PERFECTION

A brief Dialogue by St. Catherine of Siena[1]

A CERTAIN soul being one day illuminated by a ray of light received from the Author of Life, entered into the consciousness of her own misery and weakness, that is to say, of her ignorance and natural propensity to sin. Borne on still further to contemplate something of the greatness of her God, of His Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, and all the other perfections of His Divine Majesty, she perceived with great clearness how absolutely just and necessary it is that He should be served and honoured with all possible perfection and sanctity. It is *just*, because He is the Creator and Lord of the universe, and has created all things, that all may after their manner incessantly praise His holy name and be directed to His glory; therefore it is but right and fitting that the servant full of respect towards his Lord should faithfully serve Him and dutifully obey Him. She saw that it is *necessary*, because the good God has been pleased to make man for Himself, a rational creature, composed of body and soul, on this condition, that, if he shall make good use of his free will, and persevere in fidelity to Him until death, he shall be rewarded with an eternal life, rich in every manner of blessing, to which he can in no other way attain. But, notwithstanding this condition of their being, she saw that few indeed are those who fulfil their duties and therefore very few who will be saved; for nearly all "seek the things which are their own; not the things

[1] The original Italian Text of this Treatise is not now in existence; that published by Gigli being a translation from the Latin Copy preserved in the Vatican Library.

which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. ii. 21). She saw besides that the life of man is very short, and the hour and moment which will close the brief time in which it is possible for him to gain merit, very uncertain; that, in the future life, those rewards and punishments will be given to each one in just retribution by an inevitable and irrevocable sentence, which he shall have merited by the tenor of his past life; and that thenceforward there shall be no more escape from hell for ever! She saw further, that, though many discourse much and in various ways of the virtues by which God may be faithfully honoured and served, yet the capacity of the reasonable creature is so limited, the intellect so obtuse, the memory so weak, that it can neither apprehend many things, nor faithfully retain those which it has apprehended; and therefore, that though many are continually trying with all eagerness to instruct themselves, there are very few who arrive at that perfection of life with which God both ought to be and must be served. She saw that almost every one was on this account disquieted by a thousand cares and fluctuating amid a thousand agitations of spirit; and so living in a state of extreme peril for the soul. At the sight of all these things, that soul was deeply moved; then with a sudden resolution she prostrated herself before our Lord, and with vehement desire and love besought His Divine Majesty that He would be pleased to teach her some brief rules of perfection in which might be condensed all the truths taught both by the Holy Scriptures and by all kinds of spiritual writings; by the observance of which God might be served and honoured in a fitting manner, and men might lead so holy and perfect a life, that, after passing through this brief and miserable mortality, they might attain the immortal happiness prepared for them in Paradise. And God, who never fails to accomplish those holy desires He puts into the heart, rapt her in an ecstasy, and making Himself present to her spirit, thus spoke to her:—"My Beloved, these desires are above all things pleasing unto Me; and My inclination to satisfy thee is stronger than thy greatest longings to be satisfied. It is My good pleasure, since thou so wishest, to pour out upon thee all those favours that may

be necessary, or useful, or even helpful for thy eternal salvation. Listen then, and fix thy mind on what I am about to tell thee. I, the ineffable Truth, condescending to thy request, will briefly explain to thee that which fully contains within itself the sum of all virtues, and the most sublime and perfect sanctity; which comprehends in itself the teaching of all the masters of the spiritual life and the volumes of the Divine Scriptures; so that, if thou wilt behold thyself therein as in a mirror; and wilt persevere in conforming thy practice to it, thou shalt arrive at the perfect fulfilment of all that is contained whether clearly or obscurely in the Holy Books, and shalt be made worthy to enjoy henceforward a perpetual peace and an ineffable and continual joy. Know, therefore, that the salvation of My servants and all their perfection depends upon this one thing, that they do in all things My will only; and to that end that every moment of their life they use every effort to seek Me alone, to honour Me alone, to please Me alone. The more diligently they apply themselves to this, the nearer do they approach perfection; because by this means they draw nearer to Me, in Whom by pre-eminence all perfections dwell. But, that thou mayest better understand this sublime truth which I have laid open to thee in few words, look upon the face of My Christ, in whom I am well pleased. He annihilated Himself by taking the form of a servant and being made in the likeness of sinners, that you, who were buried in the thickest darkness and had utterly forsaken the way of truth, might be illuminated with His words, His example, the splendour of His Divine light, and be brought back to the right path. Observe that He continued in one unceasing exercise of obedience even unto death to teach you that your salvation entirely depends on a firm and efficacious resolution to do My Will alone. And whoever will diligently examine and meditate upon His life and doctrine, will see clearly that all perfection and sanctity consists in nothing else than in persevering obedience to My Will. Therefore does He, your Divine Leader, repeat so often: 'Not every one that saith to Me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of My Father who

is in heaven' (S. Matt. vii. 21). And it is not without reason that He twice repeats 'Lord,' since all the transitory conditions of persons in the world may be reduced to two kinds, religious and secular; and He desires to signify by this double repetition, that no one, of whatsoever condition he may be, can attain eternal beatitude by rendering Me any sort of external homage, if he does not also do in all things My Divine Will. So in another place He says: 'I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me' (S. John vi. 38); and in another place: 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me;' and further on: 'Not My will but Thine be done;' and finally: 'As the Father hath given Me commandment, so do I.' (S. John iv. 34; S. Luke xxii. 42; S. John xiv. 31.) If thou desirest, therefore, in imitation of thy Saviour, to perform perfectly My Will, in which all thy happiness consists, it is necessary that thou shouldst make no account at all of thine own will, but that thou shouldst contradict and crush it in all things, until at last it dies within thee. The more utterly thou diest to thyself, the more perfectly shalt thou live in Me; and the more thou dost empty thy heart of all which is thine own, the more abundantly will I fill it with that which is Mine."

Now when that soul had heard these most salutary doctrines of truth, she replied full of joy:—"It rejoices me more than I am able to express that Thou hast been pleased to instruct Thy most humble servant; and, as much as in me lies, I render thanks for it to Thy most gracious Majesty. Truly, as far as I can comprehend with my limited understanding, the thing cannot be otherwise than as Thou hast taught me and so well explained by the example of my blessed Saviour. For Thou, being the highest good and the only good, Who can'st not will sin, but only that which is just and right, I must infallibly do all that ought to be done if I fulfil Thy Will; and I shall fulful Thy Will if for Thy love I contradict my own, which Thou wilt not in any way constrain, but dost leave it perfectly free, that I, by voluntarily and constantly subjecting it to Thine, may become dearer and more full in Thy sight. I desire greatly to begin to do that which Thou hast told me; but

as yet I understand not well in what Thy Will is found, and by what faithful service I can best consecrate myself wholly to its fulfilment. I humbly pray Thee, therefore, if I be not importunate, and if my boldness trespass not on Thy condescension, to instruct me briefly upon this also, which above all things I desire to know."

And the Lord said to her:—"If thou seekest to know My Will, that thou mayest perfectly fulfil it, behold in one word that which it is:—that thou shouldst love Me to the utmost of thy power without ceasing; that thou shouldst love Me with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy strength. It is on the performance of this precept that all thy perfection depends; and therefore it is written that 'the end of the commandment is charity,' and that 'love is the fulfilling of the law'" (1 Tim. i. 5; Rom. xiii. 10).

To these things that soul replied:—"I understand well that Thy Will and my perfection consists in loving Thee truly as I ought with ardent love and sovereign charity; but I comprehend not well how I am to do this. I beseech Thee, instruct me also briefly on this point."

And God said to her: "Hear then and be attentive with all the application of thy mind to what I am about to tell thee. If thou desirest to love Me perfectly, thou hast three things to do. First, thy will must be detached, removed, and separated from every carnal and earthly affection, so that in this life thou shouldst love nothing temporal, fading, and transitory, except for Me. And what is yet more and above all, thou must not love Me, or thy neighbour, or thyself for thyself, but thou must love all for Me alone. For Divine love cannot tolerate any other affection with it or any earthly love. Therefore, so far as thou shalt permit thy heart to be infected with any contagion of earthly things, so far thou wilt sin against My love and fail of thy perfection; for a pure and holy soul should hold in abhorrence all that gives pleasure and enjoyment to sense. Never suffer any of the things My bounty has created for the use of men to hinder thee from loving Me. For to this end have I created all things and given them to man, that he, knowing more fully through them the rich-

ness of My bounty, may love Me in return with a larger affection. Bridle therefore with a strong hand thy appetites and carnal concupiscence; keep perpetual guard over thyself; and courageously resist all those earthly desires which Thy corrupt nature and this miserable mortal life excite in thy heart, that thou mayest be able to sing with the prophet: 'Blessed be God, who hath given strength and agility to my feet,' *i.e.* to the feet of the soul, which are the affections; 'who hath made my feet like the feet of harts, that they may flee from the dogs;' *i.e.* the snares of concupiscence of earthly things; 'and setteth me upon high places;' (Ps. xvii. 34), *i.e.* raiseth me to contemplation.

"When thou shalt have fully executed all this, thou mayest proceed to the exercise of the second thing, which is of yet higher perfection. And this is, that thou shouldst direct all thy affections, all thy thoughts, and all thy actions to My glory and honour alone, and employ thyself continually with all earnestness in praising and glorifying Me, by prayers, by words, by example, and in whatever way thou canst. And this thou must endeavour so to do as to excite in all others, as well as in thyself, these same affections and sentiments towards Me. Now this practice is yet more pleasing to Me than the first, because My Divine Will is thereby more perfectly and more directly fulfilled. There yet remains the third thing, which when thou shalt have achieved, thou mayest rest assured that nothing more is wanting to thee, and that thou hast reached perfect sanctity. This is, that thou shalt use thy utmost endeavour to attain such a disposition of spirit that thou mayest become one thing with Me, and thy will may become so entirely assimilated and conformed to My all-perfect Will, that not only shalt thou never desire that which is evil, but not even that which is good, if it be not according to My Will; so that whatever shall befall thee in this miserable life, from whatsoever quarter it may come, whether in things temporal or things spiritual, nothing shall ever disturb thy peace or trouble thy quietness of spirit; but thou shalt be established in a firm belief that I, thine omnipotent God, love thee with a dearer love and take of thee more watchful care than thou canst for thyself.

And the more perfectly thou dost abandon and resign thyself to Me, the more will I console thee with My grace, and make thee feel My presence; and thus thou wilt ever know more and more, and experience more fully, the tenderness of My love for thee. But thou wilt never reach this measure of perfection except by a firm, constant, and absolute denial of self-will. He who neglects to acquire this, neglects at the same time the most sublime perfection; and he who cheerfully embraces it, executes at the same time My most holy Will, pleases Me in the highest degree, and has Me continually with him. For there is nothing more pleasing to Me than to abide within you and work in you by My grace: 'for My delights are to be with the children of men' (Prov. viii. 31), to transform them into Myself (if only they desire it, for I will in no way do violence to their free will); in such a manner that they may become one with Me in the participation of My infinite perfections, and especially My unchangeable peace and My most perfect tranquillity. But, that thou mayest better comprehend how ardent are My desires to dwell with you, and mayest kindle in thyself a more fervent longing to subject and unite thy will with Mine, consider attentively that I have willed that My only begotten Son should become incarnate, that My Divinity, despoiled of every token of greatness or glory, should be united to humanity; in order that by this great act of benevolence and charity, by this ineffable demonstration of love, I might draw and constrain you in like manner to unite your will to Mine and to remain perpetually bound to Me alone. Consider that I have willed further that this My Son should suffer the cruel, painful, and most fearful death of the Cross, to the end that by these torments He might destroy your sin, that sin which had raised a barrier of division between you and Me so effectually that I could in no way look upon you; that further in the highest of the Sacraments I have prepared for you a table, too little appreciated, of the Body and Blood of this My Son, in order that by partaking of it you may become transformed and changed into Me. Even as the bread and wine of which you partake is changed into the substance of your body, so you, by feeding under the species of

bread and wine upon this My Son, who is one with Me, shall become spiritually transformed into Me. And this is what I have already spoken to my servant Augustine in these words:—'I am the food of grown men; grow, and thou shalt feed on Me; nor shalt thou convert Me into thee, but I will convert thee into Myself.'"

And, when that soul had heard what the will of God was, that to execute it faithfully a perfect charity was required, and that this could only be obtained by an entire annihilation of self-will, she spoke thus to the Lord:—"Thou hast manifested to me, O my Lord and God, Thy Will, and hast shown me, that, if I love Thee perfectly, I shall love nothing transitory and earthly, nor even my own self for myself, but all alone for Thee and in Thee. Thou hast added, that, in order to love Thee, I must seek with earnest care to praise and glorify Thee in all things and at all times; and that in such a manner as that others may do so likewise; that I must endeavour further to bear with a peaceful, cheerful, tranquil heart whatever may befall one in this miserable life. And now, since I gather from what Thou hast hitherto said that all these things are to be done by the abnegation of my own will, since the more I die to myself, the more perfectly I shall live in Thee; I beseech Thee to teach me in what manner I may acquire this great virtue of the perfect abnegation of myself."

And God, who is so good that He can deny nothing to the pious desires of His servants, thus replied to her:—"It is certain that everything depends upon the perfect abnegation of thyself, since the more thou dost empty thyself of thy own will, the more will I fill thee with My grace. And all thy perfection comes from the participation of My Divine goodness by means of grace, without which the human creature, in all that concerns its true dignity and perfection, is absolutely nothing. If thou dost indeed desire to attain this perfect abnegation of self, thou must prostrate thyself before Me in the most profound humility, with a thorough conviction of thine own poverty and misery; and thou must at all times eagerly seek this one thing, to obey Me alone and to do My Will only. And to this end thou must make in thy soul as

it were a little spiritual cell, closed in with the material of My Will, in which thou must enclose thyself and make therein thy constant dwelling-place; so that, wherever thou goest, thou mayest never go forth from it, and, wherever thou lookest, thou mayest never see anything beyond it; but My Will must so encompass every faculty of thy body and soul, that thou shalt never speak of anything but what thou deemest pleasing unto Me, nor think, nor do anything, but what thou believest agreeable to My Will. And it shall be that the Holy Spirit shall teach thee what thou shalt do in all things. Moreover thou mayest attain this abnegation of thine own will by another road, if thou canst obtain those who are able to guide and instruct thee according to My Spirit; namely, by subjecting thy will to them, by obediently following their counsels, and by trusting thyself and thy concerns fully to them; since he who hears My faithful and prudent servants "heareth Me" (S. Luke x. 16). But I desire further that thou shouldst consider with firm faith and profound meditation that I, thy most glorious God, I, who have created thee for eternal beatitude, am eternal, sovereign, omnipotent; that I can do with you whatever pleaseth Me; and there is none who can oppose himself in the least degree to My Will; that no good can happen to you unless sent by Me; nor can any evil befall you except by that same Will of Mine, as I have already told you by My Prophet Amos: "shall there be evil in a city which the Lord hath not done?" (Amos iii. 6), that is, which I have not permitted. In the second place, I wilt that thou seriously meditate that in Me, thy God, dwell the most perfect intelligence, and knowledge, and infinite wisdom; that, therefore, I behold all things with the utmost clearness and acutest penetration; so that in My government of thee, the heavens, and the earth, and the entire universe, I cannot be deceived in any way or misled by any error. Were it otherwise, I should neither be all wise, nor should I be God. And, that thou mayest acknowledge the more the power of My Infinite Wisdom, know that even from the evil of guilt and punishment I am able to draw a good greater than the evil. In the third place, consider attentively

that, as I am thy God, so am I infinitely good, yea, charity itself by My Essence; that, therefore, I cannot will anything but that which is useful and salutary to thee and to all men; nor can I wish any evil to My creatures; that, as man was created by My bounty, so is he loved by Me with inestimable charity. When with a firm faith thou shalt have received and pondered in thy mind these truths, thou shalt see that I only suffer tribulations, temptations, difficulties, sicknesses, and all other forms of adversity to befall men for the greater advantage of their eternal salvation; that through the very things which to you seem evils, the true evil of your bad habits may be corrected, and firm resolutions made to attain that virtue which can alone guide you to that true and ultimate good which as yet you know not. Thus illuminated by the living light of faith, thou wilt perceive that I, thy God, have infinitely more knowledge, power, and will to advance thy happiness than thou hast; and further, that thy own knowledge, power, and will for thine own good depends entirely on My grace. For this cause, seek with all diligence to submit thyself totally to My Will; so shalt thou take thy rest and abide in continual tranquillity of spirit, and shalt have Me for ever with thee, for My "place is in peace" (Ps. lxxv. 3). Nothing will then agitate or irritate thee; nothing shall be to thee an occasion of sin or scandal, for "much peace have they who love My law; and to them there is no stumbling-block" (Ps. cxviii. 165). For they so love My law, that is, My Will, which is My law by which all things are directed, they are so intimately united by it to Me, and experience such great delight in observing it, that (sin only excepted, which is offensive to God) nothing has power to disturb them, from whatsoever quarter it may come, or of whatsoever weight or quality it may be. For the eyes of their soul are clear and undefiled; and therefore they see that from Me, the sovereign Ruler of the world, Who govern all things with infinite Wisdom, Order, and Charity, nothing but good can spring; and that I can take care of them and their affairs far better and more successfully than they could of themselves. And thus considering that I and none other am the Author of all that

they have to endure, they are strong with an invincible patience, and suffer all things, not only with resignation, but with cheerfulness and joy, tasting in all things which befall them externally or internally the sweetness of My ineffable charity. And this is to "think of the Lord in goodness" (Wis. i. 1), that is, to believe, and meditate with a cheerful and grateful spirit, even in the midst of tribulations and difficulties, that it is I who sweetly dispose all things, and that whatever happens springs from the inexhaustible fountain of My goodness. But the great good which this holy consideration and blessed disposition of heart would effect, is hindered, corrupted, and destroyed solely by this one thing, the love of yourselves and of your own will. If you destroy this within you, there shall be no more hell for you, neither the eternal torment of body and soul prepared for the damned, nor that other hell of interior turmoil which you make for yourselves and suffer during your mortal life, through your perpetual agitations and anxious cares about many things. If, therefore, thou wouldst live in grace in this world which passes rapidly away, and if thou wouldst live in glory in that world which has no end, seek to die to thyself, denying thyself and laying down thine own will. For "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Apoc. xiv. 13), and "blessed also are the poor in spirit" (S. Matt. v. 3), since they already see Me in a manner in this their pilgrimage by reciprocal love, and shall behold Me hereafter in glory and honour in their true home.

SO BE IT.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A.

RELATION OF A DOCTRINE, OR SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTION.

Written in the year of our Lord 1376, on the seventh day of the month of January, by Brother William Flete, an Englishman, of the Hermits of St. Augustine in Lecceto, a man of great learning and sanctity; which doctrine and document received *vivâ voce* from the Seraphic Virgin, St. Catherine of Siena, of whom he was a disciple, was by him reduced to writing in Latin, and has lately been translated into the vulgar tongue in the following manner, from an ancient manuscript, still preserved in the Archives of the Fathers of St. Dominic of Siena, similar to the other ancient text preserved in the Chartreuse of Pontignano near Siena, amongst the memorials of the Blessed Stephen Maconi, another disciple, and secretary of the Saint.

The holy Mother, speaking of herself as of a third person, said that in the beginning of her illumination she placed as the foundation of her whole life, in opposition to self-love, the stone of self-knowledge, which she separated into the three following little stones:

The first was the consideration of her creation; that is to say, how she had no existence whatever of herself, but one solely dependent on the Creator, as well in its production as in its preservation, and that all this the Creator had done, and was still doing, through His grace and mercy.

The second was the consideration of her redemption; *i.e.*, how

the Redeemer had restored with His own Blood the life of grace which was before destroyed; and this through His pure and fervent love, unmerited by man.

The third was the consideration of her own sins, committed after baptism, and the graces therein received, through which she, having deserved eternal damnation, was astonished that out of the eternal goodness of God, He had not commanded the earth to swallow her up.

From these three considerations there arose within her so great a hatred against herself, that she desired nothing whatever conformable to her own will, but only to the will of God, Who, as she already knew, willed nothing but her good. From this it followed that every tribulation or trial was to her a matter of pleasure and delight, not only because it came through the will of God, but also because she saw herself to be thereby punished and chastised. She began likewise to have the greatest dislike to those things in which she used formerly to take pleasure, and great delight in what formerly displeased her; thus the caresses of her mother, in which she had once found so much pleasure, she now shunned as she would sword or poison, whilst at the same time she joyfully embraced all the abuse and insults that were bestowed upon her.

And she also welcomed what at the same time she abhorred—the temptations of Satan; she welcomed them for the suffering they brought, and abhorred them, inasmuch as they offered her sensual enjoyments. After these things there was kindled within her an immense desire for purity, and after having made continual prayer during many months to obtain it, and that it might be bestowed on her in its highest perfection, our Lord at last appearing to her said: "Beloved daughter, if thou wouldst obtain the purity thou desirest, thou must needs first become perfectly united to Me, Who am purity itself, which thou shalt obtain if thou observe three things. In the first place, thou must turn thyself wholly towards Me with thine intention, and have Me alone for thine end in all thine actions, and make it thy sole study to keep Me ever before thine eyes. Secondly, denying thine own will,

and paying no regard to that of any creature soever, thou must have respect and consideration for Mine, which wills thy sanctification, since I neither wish nor permit anything except for thy good. If thou attentively observe this, nothing shall sadden or disturb thee even for an hour, but rather thou wilt esteem thyself obliged to any who insult thee. Moreover, thou shalt not judge anything to be sinful unless thou knowest it manifestly to be so, and then thou shalt be indignant against the sin, but shalt compassionate the sinner. The third thing is, that thou judge the actions of My servants, not according to thine own inclination and taste, but according to My judgment; because thou knowest full well that I have said, 'In My Father's house are many mansions,' and because the mansion of glory corresponds with the merit of the way; so, as there are many mansions in that Fatherland, there are also many roads leading thereto. It is therefore My will that thou judge not My servants in any way, but that thou shouldst have the highest respect for all their actions, provided they be not expressly against My teaching. If thou observe these three things, thou shalt become well regulated in thyself towards Me by means of the first, and towards thy neighbour, be he good or evil, by means of the second and third. In this way thou shalt not through vices quit the way of virtue, and consequently shalt have and shalt perfectly preserve purity, by the aid and operation of My grace.

For the better explanation of the foregoing, she also said that self-love is the occasion of every evil and the ruin of every good; and that it is of two sorts: namely, sensitive and spiritual. The first is the cause of all sensual sins, as well as of all others that are open and manifest, and that are committed through affection towards earthly and created things; that is to say, when for the sake of such things the commandments of the Creator are despised and transgressed. The second kind of self-love, called spiritual, is that which causes a man who has a contempt for earthly things, for all creatures, and even for his own sensuality, to be, in spite of all this, so tenaciously attached to his own spiritual sense and to his own opinion, that he will neither serve God nor walk in

His ways, unless according to his own inclination and sentiments. Hence it follows, since God will have man to be absolutely destitute of self-will, that such an one can neither remain where he is, nor continue going on his way, so he must needs fall, because he adheres more to his own will than to that of God.

Of this sort are all those who will choose for themselves a state of life and occupation agreeable to their own notions, and not according to the vocation of God, decided by the counsel of prudent and discreet men. Such again are those who attach themselves too much to any spiritual practice or exercise, for instance, fasting and the like, in which they place, as it were, their end, so that if perchance it happen that they are unable to practise it, they give way at once to despair, and abandon everything. In this class may also be numbered souls who have an excessive love for consolations and spiritual sweetnesses, for when these are wanting, they at once fall into discouragement. For true spiritual love loves God alone, and the salvation of souls for God's sake. Let all things then be made use of in due order for this end, nor let the means, whatever they be, trouble us, provided that their end be the honour of God and the salvation of our neighbour. Whosoever then possesses true spiritual love, must judge all things and accept all things according to the will of God, and not according to the will of men: and when deprived of any spiritual consolation, he should at once reflect and say: "This happens through the Divine plan; by the permission of God, Who, in all the adversities He sends me, seeks and wills nothing but my justification and sanctification;" and with this thought all that is bitter will become sweet. Thus spoke the Saint.

The same Brother William Flete adds further the following words: "Our Mother, Blessed Catherine, asked our Lord for solitude, and he replied to her: Many people remain in their cell who live out of their cell; My will is that thy cell be the knowledge of thyself and of thy sins. From this cell Catherine never issued forth, and every servant of God should act in the same way, because in this manner he would keep within his cell in whatever place he might be."

APPENDIX B.

FATHER WILLIAM FLETE.

(*From Pitts' "De Illustribus Angliæ Scriptoribus,"* p. 521.)

Joseph Pamphili calls him William Flete, and several foreign writers also call him Flete. He was an English monk of the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine; a lover of solitude and heavenly contemplation, and very famous for his sanctity. Ever ascending from virtue to virtue, and growing every day more holy, he found by his own experience that no perfection in this world is so great as that, by the help of the Divine grace, we may not attain to a greater. When he heard that some of his brethren in Italy had been reformed and had embraced a stricter discipline in their monasteries, he hastened thither and persevered among them (as Ambrose Coriolanus and James of Bergamo testify) in wonderful innocence and integrity of morals even to the last day of his life. He is said to have received divine revelations in his prayers and contemplations, especially about the future calamities of England, on which subject he wrote various epistles, full of varied learning and Christian zeal, addressed chiefly to the members of his own Order and Institute. The following list is preserved of his writings:—

1. To the Provincial of his Order in England, one Epistle. *Obsecro in Domino Jesu.*

2. To the Doctors of the Province, one Epistle. *Cum timore Dei, et reverentia.*

3. To the Brethren in general. *Ait enim Apostolus, Spectaculum.*

4. Predictions to the English of calamities coming upon England. One book.

5. Divers Epistles. One book.

6. Of Remedies against Temptations. One book.

Some or all of these were preserved in Pitts' time among the Norwich MSS. in the Public Library of Cambridge. The same writer represents him as dying in Italy in 1380, in the reign of Richard II., a date which is proved to be incorrect by the fact of his sermon on St. Catherine having been delivered in 1382. Pitts also quotes Sabellicus, who affirms that he was finally enrolled among the number of the Saints, which, however, would seem to mean no more than that he enjoyed among his own Brethren the repute of sanctity.

APPENDIX C.

BULL OF BONIFACE IX.

(*From the Bullarium of the Order*, p. 352.)

September 8, A.D. 1395.

BONIFACE IX.

To Richard, King of England, that the Clerks who recite the Daily Office with him according to the rite of the Friars-Preachers, may retain the same rite when they are absent, for two months only.

LXIX.

Boniface, Bishop, Servant of the Servants of God, to his most dear son in Christ, Richard, the illustrious King of England, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

The special and sincere devotion which thou hast proved thyself to bear towards Ourselves and the Roman Church, deservedly induces Us graciously and favourably to grant thee those things which thou suppliantly asked of us. As, therefore, formerly We judged it fitting to grant to thy Majesty by the authority of our letters,[1] as is more fully contained in the said letters, that as thou

[1] These letters are missing.

didst allege thou wast accustomed to recite the Canonical Hours according to the rite of the Friar-Preachers, the Clerks, Priests, and even the secular attendants of thy Majesty, should be allowed to recite the Canonical Hours in this manner according to the rite of the Friar-Preachers, which, it was asserted, differed but little from that of the Roman Church, and should not be bound, if they did not wish it, to observe any other rite or order in this matter; so, being willing now to grant thee a still greater favour, We, by the authority of these present letters, as a special grace, concede to thy Majesty, that, as often as it shall happen that one or more of the said Clerks, Priests, or Religious, who have been accustomed to say the Hours with thee in this manner, shall be absent from thee, with the intention of returning to thee, they, while thus absent, may, for the space of two months only, to be reckoned from the day on which they left thee, be allowed to say their Hours according to the said rite of the Order of Friar-Preachers, nor shall they be bound against their will to observe any other rite or order.

It shall not, therefore, be lawful for any man to infringe this Our grant, or, &c.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the 6th of the Ides of September, in the sixth year of our Pontificate.

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